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Mr Gareth Millington  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Millington

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Chipping Sodbury School**

Following my visit to your school on 1 July 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in December 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in December 2015, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

Senior leaders have introduced tighter systems and procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and for evaluating its impact on raising pupils' achievement. There are indications that raised expectations are starting to improve teaching and learning, but these improvements are inconsistent across the school and the rate of progress at this stage is not rapid enough. It is likely that the school will require the full 24 months to become a good school. Progress in the sixth form is slow and, for this reason, it is recommended that the school receives a further monitoring visit before the next inspection.

The school should take further action to:

- check assessment information to ensure that it is consistent with the quality of pupils' work
- ensure that the school's 'lesson essentials' are applied consistently by all teachers.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, heads of faculty and the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. A discussion was also held with a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Visits to lessons were undertaken with senior leaders who are all members of the school's small core observation team. During these visits, the inspector looked at pupils' work, talked to them about it and compared this with the school's evaluation of their current progress.

## **Context**

There have been no significant changes to staffing since the inspection. The senior leadership team has been expanded through internal promotions to increase its capacity to secure the rapid improvements the school needs. Pupil numbers are set to rise next year.

At the start of the current academic year, Chipping Sodbury School combined with Brimsham Green School and the Ridings Federation Yate International Academy to provide a greater breadth of study programmes for learners aged 16 to 19 through the Cotswold Edge arrangements.

## **Main findings**

Senior leaders and governors, supported by the local authority, have produced a detailed action plan to tackle all of the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report and by their own monitoring. The new arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the impact of these actions are comprehensive and fully involve faculty leaders. The actions planned, and in many cases already started, are well considered and appropriate. However, the resulting improvements in teaching are not yet fully embedded across the school. GCSE results are expected to improve this year, but the achievement of boys and disadvantaged pupils (those supported by the pupil premium) needs to rise further.

The recently introduced assessment procedures are well planned and understood by teachers and by most pupils. The procedures build from starting points established early in Year 7 (based on key stage 2 and the school's own assessments) through to the end of Year 11. However, more could be done to use the quality of pupils' work and their progress over the first term or so in Year 7 to refine these starting points so they provide a more accurate baseline on which to measure pupils' future progress.

Senior leaders, supported well by heads of faculty, have introduced more robust arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching and linking this to the tracking of pupils' progress. A systematic process brings together the analysis of teachers' assessment information, observations of teaching and learning, and the checking of pupils' work. Improved internal and external moderation arrangements are designed to ensure that assessment information is more reliable and accurate. However, the impact of these arrangements is inconsistent. In some cases, the level and quality of

pupils' work does not support the assessment data. The improved tracking arrangements are not established well in the sixth form.

A set of agreed 'lesson essentials' has been established and teachers have received training to develop a clear understanding of what good teaching looks like, including in the sixth form. The essentials focus on raising teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of, setting higher levels of challenge and making sure that pupils receive good feedback on their progress and achievement. In some classes, it is possible to see when these essentials were introduced, for example in teachers using key questions to frame a lesson and giving pupils better feedback. However, this is not yet consistent in all subjects and for all teachers. The level of work seen in some pupils' books is well below what they should be achieving to meet the expectations set for them by the school's assessment system. Too much feedback lacks clarity so that pupils are unsure about what to do to improve their work. Some feedback to the most able pupils does not challenge them to do even better. When pupils are given clear feedback and the time to make corrections or redraft some of their work, they mostly respond well, although this is not happening across the school. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school continues to be good, but more of them need to show positive attitudes to their work by, for example, responding carefully to teachers' feedback.

Sixth-form students are mostly on suitable programmes of study to prepare them for their next steps in education, training, employment or an apprenticeship. Almost all complete their courses with some success. Good attention is given to developing students' wider employability skills. However, the achievement of many students is not good enough given their starting points. In too many subjects, students with similar starting points achieve widely different outcomes. There is too much variability in achievement across the range of subjects offered. Senior and sixth form leaders are aware that students' attendance in lessons is not yet good enough. The formation of the Cotswold Edge arrangements with two other secondary schools is starting to bring about some improvements, but progress is currently too slow. The targets set for improving achievement in the sixth form are not ambitious enough. Leaders need to analyse all information about students' attendance, retention and progress to determine more precisely what needs to be done and to monitor and evaluate the impact of the actions taken.

The external review of governance, initiated by the local authority and agreed with the school, identified the need for a clarity of vision for the school and training to enable governors to interpret and analyse data more effectively to check its reliability and accuracy. Work has started on both of these and governors are now better informed, better trained and more equipped to ask questions about the quality of teaching and whether it is raising pupils' achievement. They are aware that both need to improve significantly. However, it is too early to fully determine the impact on how well governors are holding school leaders to account. Usefully, governors' meetings are now aligned with the school's assessment schedule to enable them to be more involved in monitoring and evaluation. Governors need more precise analysis of attendance, retention and achievement information to enable them to provide the support and challenge necessary to rapidly improve the quality of education provided in the sixth form.

## **External support**

Although neither was recommended in the inspection report, the local authority undertook a review of the use of pupil premium funding and initiated an external review of governance. Both led to clear recommendations for school leaders and governors. Local authority school improvement officers also arranged monitoring visits and hold monthly meetings with the headteacher and the chair of the governing body. Links with an outstanding school were also set up to enable leaders to learn from best practice, including how to improve the quality of the sixth-form provision. As a local authority maintained school, the school's leaders and governors must make as much use as possible of the support available to ensure the school improves rapidly.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of children's services for South Gloucestershire and the Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jim Sage  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**