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22 February 2017

Ms Jackie Cooper  
Headteacher  
William Allitt School  
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Dear Ms Cooper

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to William Allitt School**

Following my visit to your school on 3 February 2017, 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 July 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that its improvement plan has clear and measurable milestones so that the governing body can hold leaders fully to account for pupils' achievement, and particularly the achievement of disadvantaged pupils
- maintain the relentless drive to ensure that all pupils receive teaching of consistently good quality.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you and other leaders to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also met with governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a senior education adviser from the local authority. I spoke with two groups of pupils in formal meetings and other pupils in lessons. I made short visits to eight lessons, each accompanied by you or another member of the senior leadership team. I considered a range of documents, including the school's improvement plan, your evaluation of the school's effectiveness and the school's pupil premium strategy.

## **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection, nine teaching staff, including a deputy headteacher, have left the school and 10 new teachers have been recruited. At the time of the last inspection, the school was subject to an academy order from the Department for Education (DfE). This is still in place but you learned very recently that plans for the school's transfer to a local multi-academy trust had been terminated. The DfE has since informed you that it is pursuing other potential sponsors.

## **Main findings**

Since the section 5 inspection, you and the school's other staff have continued to bring about improvements to the quality of education provided for pupils. As a result, teaching is better than at any time since you became headteacher. Pupils are making faster progress than before.

You know that the GCSE results in 2016 were not good enough. Published performance information has yet to be confirmed but it is highly likely the school will not meet the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of key stage 4. The school has recently been identified by the DfE as a coasting school.

Last year's results have led to a much more assertive approach to supporting and challenging the pupils currently in Year 11 as they prepare for their GCSE examinations. A well-planned and tightly organised range of additional teaching before and after school is in place to help remedy the gaps in pupils' knowledge that their teachers have identified. This strategy is highly valued by the pupils and their attendance at the extra sessions is good. The pupils I met articulated precisely how the additional teaching is helping them. The teachers' willingness to provide this extra support reflects well on their collective determination to tackle the legacy of underachievement.

At the same time, you are taking effective action to ensure that the day-to-day teaching that all pupils receive is of good quality. Middle leaders are playing a

strong and effective role in helping to bring this about. Last year you identified the subject leaders who carried out their roles most effectively and, in some cases, you have increased their responsibilities to speed up the pace of change.

This improved middle leadership is ensuring much greater consistency in the accuracy of the checks on the quality of teaching that are carried out. Very clear lines of responsibility and accountability, underpinned by a strong appraisal system, enable all those with leadership responsibilities to take action quickly where teaching needs to improve. You and other staff provided clear evidence of how improvements to teaching have been brought about. You are also working effectively to increase the proportion of exceptional teaching in the school. The increased rigour of the checks being made on teaching and improved training rightly give you confidence that the quality of teaching is improving quickly.

You have brought similar rigour to the school's assessment system to ensure that teachers' predictions of pupils' results are rooted securely in evidence of pupils' achievement over time.

New leadership arrangements are ensuring that pupils' attendance is now monitored regularly and thoroughly. Staff take rapid action to support and challenge families whose children do not attend school regularly. This has resulted in a reduction in the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent, though you know this remains too high.

Since the section 5 inspection, you commissioned a second review of the school's use of the extra funding provided to support disadvantaged pupils. This has helped sharpen the school's practice further and identified additional strategies to diminish the differences in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally. The differences are reducing but you know that they remain too wide in key stage 4.

The school's improvement plan links well to the priorities for improvement identified by Ofsted. Not all the measures of success, however, are sufficiently clear to enable leaders and governors to check easily that the actions being taken are making enough difference. This weakens the capacity of the governing body to hold you fully to account for this additional spending.

Governors understand the school's current position accurately, though the school's analysis of the impact of pupil premium spending on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is not good enough. Governors have provided good support to the school in preparation for becoming a sponsored academy.

You are bringing about the rapid improvements needed during a period of considerable uncertainty for the school, together with the constant challenges posed by the school's ageing buildings. You are aware that future plans for the school and the demands of maintaining the school's decaying infrastructure must not become

distractions if the school is to become good by the time of its next section 5 inspection.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The school has benefited from a range of external support, including from the local authority and the former sponsor-in-waiting. You value this support but it has been accompanied by significant demands on your time and the school's resources in preparation for the school's transfer to a local multi-academy trust that is no longer going ahead. During the inspection, I met with a senior representative of the local authority who committed to increasing immediately the support the local authority provides to the school in light of the collapse of the planned sponsorship arrangements. This is an appropriate response to ensure that the school maintains its trajectory of improvement.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Derbyshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Burton  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**