

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mr Benjamin Hulbert  
Headteacher  
Tweedmouth Community Middle School  
Billendean Terrace  
Spittal  
Berwick-upon-Tweed  
Northumberland  
TD15 2DJ

Dear Mr Hulbert

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Tweedmouth Community Middle School**

Following my visit to your school on 17 November 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 November 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 recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become a good school.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher, middle leaders and members of the governing body to discuss the actions being taken to improve the school since the last inspection. I observed teaching and learning with senior and middle leaders. I met a group of pupils to discuss their learning and any changes they had identified since the last inspection. I examined the school improvement plan, as well as other documents, including self-evaluation documents and local authority evaluations of the school's work. I looked at work in pupils' books and also looked at the school's new system for tracking pupils' progress.

## **Context**

The previous deputy headteacher left the school to take up a new post in July 2017. The school's assistant headteacher took responsibility for subject leadership in mathematics in November 2016. He was subsequently promoted to the post of deputy headteacher in June 2017. A vacancy for the post of assistant headteacher has recently been advertised. The school is currently undergoing a review of its staffing structure.

## **Main Findings**

Senior leaders have worked closely with teachers to address key areas for improvement since the last inspection. They have adopted a more rigorous approach to the demands of teaching the new national curriculum. This has contributed to improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. Leaders have sought challenge and support from further afield in order to develop a stronger awareness of effective teaching and leadership. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving and middle leaders are more effective in holding their teams to account.

Leaders have made the development of a new assessment system a key priority. This is helping leaders and teachers to gain a regular picture of pupils' progress and put appropriate actions in place to more promptly address any underachievement. The half-termly progress checks in core subjects, and termly tracking in foundation subjects, have made teachers more accountable for the progress of the pupils in their classes. Performance management targets are now more closely aligned with school priorities.

Leaders and teachers have also taken actions to improve the accuracy of the information they use to track pupils' progress. Middle leaders have worked with external partners and local authority advisers to gain a more accurate view of standards. The local authority formally moderated standards of writing at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 and found teachers' judgments to be accurate. Leaders have a much more accurate view of standards, such that their predictions for 2017 outcomes in external tests were within half a percentage point of the actual outcomes.

Middle leaders have received better training to develop their subject leadership. In addition to their work with external partners, they have carried out paired observations with senior leaders to sharpen their evaluations of teaching. Judgements on the quality of teaching now link lesson observations of teaching with regular work scrutinies and pupils' progress information. As a result, middle leaders have an improved awareness of the impact of teaching on progress over time.

Leaders have used support plans for teachers to address any weaknesses in teaching. In paired observations, leaders were able to identify strengths and some areas for improvement. Middle leaders have a clear awareness of key school priorities for the current academic year which are now more clearly linked to their performance targets. They and their teams have a heightened awareness of pupils' progress although they do not consistently use assessment information to set work that enables all pupils to make good progress.

The actions of leaders, teachers and governors contributed to improving outcomes at the end of key stage 2 in 2017. At key stage 2, the proportions of pupils achieving the expected standards substantially increased and were above those seen nationally. At key stage 2, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined rose to 67%, an increase of 34%. Pupils made much better progress in both reading and mathematics. However, progress and attainment declined in writing. While this was influenced by more demanding moderation practices that saw a decline in outcomes across the local authority, writing for groups, such as boys and disadvantaged pupils, remains much weaker.

The then assistant headteacher took direct responsibility for mathematics leadership in January 2017. He introduced a new scheme of work, alongside more explicit guidance for pupils on how to set out their work. Leaders also provided additional curriculum time for mathematics. As a result, attainment rose considerably, with 84% of pupils achieving expected standards compare to only 46% the previous year. The proportions achieving higher levels rose from nought to 10%. Pupils' progress in mathematics has also improved, although it still remains below that seen nationally.

Having secured significant improvements in the proportions of pupils reaching expected standards, leaders are now targeting the progress of particular groups of pupils who they describe as their 'key marginals' in order to accelerate progress. Leaders have identified boys, disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils as the groups who are currently making slower progress. Leaders are setting targets that are more challenging for these pupils to compensate for any underachievement and they are reviewing progress more regularly.

In discussion with pupils, they all said they could identify improvements in mathematics teaching. They were also aware of the new themed topics that were creating links between subjects. They felt that more regular homework was adding increasing depth to their learning. However, a minority of pupils expressed concerns over behaviour in lessons and aspects of bullying around the site. Leaders must ensure that while addressing key areas for improvement, they do not neglect other aspects of the school's work, such as personal development, behaviour and welfare, which had been areas of strength at the time of the previous inspection.

Leaders have addressed a number of key areas for improvement and secured significant improvement in core attainment. However, the overall gains in reading and mathematics have been tempered by weaker progress in writing. Leaders have set additional targets to close the gaps in progress for boys, the most able and disadvantaged pupils, although differences remain. Leaders also need to make sure that, while focusing upon those areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report, they remain mindful of pupils' concerns on behaviour and the need to support progress in the wider curriculum.

### **External support**

The school has worked closely with the school improvement partner to gain an objective view of standards. New partnerships have been developed with outstanding schools to strengthen subject expertise. More rigorous moderation processes have helped middle leaders to develop a more accurate view of standards. Middle leaders have worked with both first and secondary schools to develop a stronger awareness of all aspects of transition across key stages. Improvement partners and the local authority have worked closely with phase and subject leaders to verify leaders' judgements on the quality of teaching and learning. These judgements are becoming more accurate as a result.

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

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Kirtley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**