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8 May 2018

Mr Denis McCabe  
Headteacher  
Aldworth School  
Western Way  
Basingstoke  
Hampshire  
RG22 6HA

Dear Mr McCabe

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Aldworth School**

Following my visit to your school on 24 April 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring 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 March 2017. 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 for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- improve the quality of leadership and management of how additional funds for disadvantaged pupils are spent
- ensure that actions on improvement plans have measurable outcomes so that governors can routinely hold leaders to account for their work
- embed the recent improvements to teaching and learning
- improve pupils' attendance.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you and members of your senior and middle leadership teams to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. I spoke with the

local authority adviser by telephone. I also met with a group of pupils formally, and spoke with others as I visited lessons. Lesson visits were undertaken alongside senior leaders. During these lesson visits, I also looked at pupils' books. I examined a range of documentation, including your development plans and evaluations of the school's work.

## **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection, you have reorganised the staffing structure of the school. There have been extensive staffing changes throughout the school. In total, 36 teaching and support staff left and 34 joined the school during this period. There have been several changes of governors as well as a new chair of the governing body.

## **Main findings**

In the last year, you and your team have focused on improving teaching and learning. The teaching and learning staff group has been fundamental to this. This work has been effective in establishing non-negotiables for classroom teachers and sharing best practice across the school. Staff speak positively about the small learning groups that they are part of. Some explained to me how this work has supported and challenged them to develop their planning and classroom practice. However, alongside this supportive work, you have not shied away from providing more formal support for teachers where needed; you have taken difficult leadership decisions when required. Middle leaders routinely monitor and evaluate the work of their teams. They use this information well in order to help support and challenge staff.

Pupils recognise the change in their lessons. They told me that, overall, lessons are more purposeful. They like the new lesson structures and noted that many teachers are putting a great deal of time and effort into planning lessons. Pupils said that these lessons and learning activities challenge them and help them to learn well.

Pupils also spoke positively about the impact of the new behaviour support system of 'red, amber, green'. They told me that it had reduced low-level disruption in lessons. They like the system but are, quite rightly, annoyed when they feel that it is not used fairly or according to the policy. I saw pupils who were focused on their learning in the lessons that I visited. I also observed pupils moving around the school sensibly, showing respect for each other.

Leaders have simplified the system for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress. They have, rightly, worked to improve the accuracy of the information they collect for analysis and have put in well-considered support and moderation to improve this. Leaders have supported and challenged all staff to ensure that their assessments of pupils' work and progress are accurate. Some subject areas, such as science, have made thoughtful use of external moderation in order to refine their assessments.

Middle leaders have checked that all staff refer to assessment information about pupils when planning learning activities.

School information suggests that pupils are making better progress overall. However, disadvantaged pupils' progress remains a concern. Following the previous inspection, you quickly commissioned an external review of your use of the additional funds for these pupils, as recommended in the inspection report. However, the leaders responsible for allocating these funds have not acted swiftly enough in response to the recommendations. You are aware that this work needs to improve and are taking steps to change this.

Nevertheless, some work has been undertaken to support disadvantaged pupils. The school's case study review suggests that this has had a positive impact in some aspects of their work but this analysis is not supported with evidence. You are aware that the use of this additional funding must be evaluated carefully so that future spending can be planned wisely.

Your improvement plans for ongoing school development identify a useful range of activities. However, leaders' evaluations focus on checking if actions have been taken rather than considering the difference that they make to pupils' learning and progress. Many also lack clear deadlines and success criteria. This makes it difficult for governors to monitor school improvement and hold leaders to account.

Governors have continued to develop their challenge of leaders' work. The minutes of their meetings show that they ask sharply focused and pertinent questions. However, they do not consistently follow up conversations that they hold with leaders. Consequently, some changes have not happened as quickly as intended, especially those relating to the use of funds for disadvantaged pupils. Governors are aware that they need to be sharper when checking whether all the statutory requirements for the publication of information on the school's website are met.

You know that pupils' attendance needs to improve, especially for pupils receiving free school meals. Your team has produced useful analysis of this situation and already started to address it.

### **External support**

Leaders and governors have made good use of the wide range of external support provided by the local authority, especially that relating to improving teaching and learning, human resources and leadership. The local authority also brokered a very beneficial school improvement project. This has helped the school to move forward. Local school networks have also been useful, as have the in-service training activities shared as part of these networks.

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

Yours sincerely

Lucy English  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**