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8 November 2007

Mr James Griffiths
The Headteacher
Trevelyan Middle School
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Dear Mr Griffiths

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 31 October 2007, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass my thanks on to your Chair of Governors for taking the time to talk to me.

Since the school was last inspected in January, unvalidated results of the summer's assessments have become available. These show that the progress made by pupils in Year 6 has improved, particularly in English where a larger proportion achieved level 5. However the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 in mathematics is well below average and middle and higher ability boys are continuing to make poor progress overall.

As a result of the inspection in February 2007, the school was asked to:

- Implement rigorous and robust systems and policies for monitoring outcomes and evaluating performance that inform whole school planning
- Increase the amount of good and better teaching and share existing good practice in planning so that teaching is well matched to pupils' individual needs including the needs of the more able.
- Develop the use of assessment information and marking more effectively to help pupils see more clearly how to improve
- Improve standards in English in Years 5 and 6, particularly in boys' writing.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making inadequate progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement. This is because, although senior leaders are committed to improvement and are working hard, there are weaknesses in the way in which they are leading the improvement agenda which are replicated at all levels in the school. First, members of the school are not yet generating or using data to give them evidence which would enable them to judge their own strengths and weaknesses. Planning is not based on a clear understanding of where the school is now and does not identify clear quantifiable targets and milestones to be achieved on the way.

Second, they are not prioritising effectively. Planning for improvement is too all-encompassing to be manageable. Third, progress towards targets is not evaluated in order to enable appropriate revisions to plans. The governing body has wisely created a subcommittee with responsibility for monitoring the school's progress on the key issues outlined above. However, governors are similarly uninformed about current performance and future targets and are not sufficiently rigorous in their monitoring. Performance management systems are in place, but the targets set are not specific enough to support the school's action plan. The school therefore has not managed to make progress towards the implementation of rigorous and robust systems for monitoring outcomes and use the evaluation of their performance to inform planning.

In the lessons observed teachers were using a wider range of strategies some of which were very effective at ensuring that all pupils are engaged in thinking and learning. Their use of interactive whiteboards and other resources effectively promoted learning. However, expectations were generally too low, particularly of middle and higher ability pupils, and pace was slow. Work was not matched to the range of individual needs within each lesson. The school was not able to demonstrate that individual teachers' teaching had improved in terms of the progress made by pupils in lessons. Although the school has sought to moderate all judgements about teaching, it appeared, during the visit, that the school's judgements were generous which casts doubt on the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation of teaching.

There is evidence that some teachers are good at assessing which pupils need further support to grasp a concept during a lesson and ensuring that this is given, but equally others are missing opportunities to correct misunderstandings and help those who are not finding tasks accessible. Pupils are now aware of what level they are working at and many are beginning to understand for what level they are aiming. Some teachers are marking pupils' work very effectively indicating both the level that the child has reached and giving guidance about what they need to do next to secure improvement. This, however, is not consistent and is markedly absent from the work of the higher ability pupils who are not sufficiently challenged.

Appropriate tracking systems are being developed to enable the school to use assessment information effectively in order to secure progress. The assessment manager has begun to be able to identify pupils who are not making the progress expected and some interventions have been made, with success, as a result of this. There is no system yet to share this information widely across the school and there is significant mistrust of data. No attempt has yet been made to ascertain which pupils are performing below the level expected of them for their age in order to plan strategies to help them catch up and no analysis of the data has taken place to identify groups that are underperforming. In crucial subjects, heads of department are not aware of the significance of their pupils' performance data and they are not using the data to refine teaching strategies.

The school has done well in improving standards in English in Years 5 and 6 as a result of the introduction of extended writing sessions and their policy of giving helpful feedback on what to improve when marking pupils' work.

The local authority has had some positive impact supporting teachers in classrooms and has guided the school on the introduction of appropriate tracking systems to enable them to manage pupils' performance data. Although the authority has supported the school in moderating teaching and learning judgements the evidence of this visit suggests that this has not been effective. In addition, the local authority has failed to support leadership and management sufficiently well to ensure that the school has made adequate progress towards addressing the issues identified for improvement. In particular, it has not ensured that the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning process is robust, rigorous and helpful. Because quantitative success criteria have not been agreed it has not been possible for the local authority to monitor the progress made by the school or hold the school to account effectively.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emma Ing".

Emma Ing
Her Majesty's Inspector