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13 January 2011
Mr C James
Headteacher
Windsor Park CofE(C) Middle School
Springfield Road
Uttoxeter
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Dear Mr James

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Windsor Park CofE (Controlled) Middle School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 12 January 2011, and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please also thank your chair of governors, and the local authority adviser, for their time and professional contributions.

As a result of the inspection on 23 June 2010, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Published 2010 Key Stage 2 data supported the previous inspection finding of below average overall standards and inadequate progress. Since that time, the school has collaborated with other local middle schools to moderate teacher assessments of Year 8 pupils, which indicate that these pupils are now achieving in line with expectations. Staff changes, particularly in English, are helping to resolve previous weaknesses for some Year 6 classes. A new middle management team has enthusiastically risen to the demand for more robust monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. They have been well trained through consultative arrangements with local authority advisers, and are conducting suitably frequent lesson visits to help embed new lesson planning and delivery expectations. Staff are equally keen to resolve the areas of weakness identified at the previous inspection, and are working hard to try to improve the quality of their teaching. The school now has good information about pupils' prior attainment and progress. This, together with particular information on pupils' special needs and/or disabilities, is now at the fingertips of every classroom teacher so they can use it to inform planning. It is also being used well to direct intervention for pupils that are falling behind.

All teachers plan lessons using a standard format, but they do not consistently plan for a close match between the abilities and needs of each particular pupil, or the task that they are asked to perform in lessons. The best examples seen ensured that different groups of pupils had different starting points, of appropriate difficulty, that challenged and motivated them from the outset of the lesson. In one outstanding lesson, pupils thrived on the challenges set and worked hard to understand and then practise new skills, all the time being encouraged by the teacher. One pupil exclaimed, 'Now I will be able to do the homework easily!'; clear evidence that he had learned a new skill. However, in most lessons, all pupils do the same thing; any differentiation is 'by outcome' as pupils complete the same task to different degrees. When this is coupled to lengthy teacher-led discussions, pupils make insufficient progress, especially those of average to low ability. The majority of teaching is satisfactory, because teachers do not always assign their well-prepared variety of tasks and supporting resources well enough to different groups of pupils for teaching to be good. Marking is consistently good now; teachers are accurately identifying strengths and areas for development, and giving good written advice on how pupils could improve their work. As yet, pupils are not in the habit of acting upon that advice directly, by, for example, making corrections or completing a supplementary task. Pupils are becoming familiar with what they should be aiming to do in order to reach their academic potential. The school is now setting suitably challenging targets overall.

The local authority's statement of action meets Ofsted's requirements and is effective in helping the school to address the areas for improvement. The local authority is successfully supporting a strengthened middle management team, and helping to establish new leadership and staffing within the English department. School staff have appreciated this support. Governors have begun training to help them assume a more independent oversight of school life. The school now has a new School Improvement Partner, who is familiar with middle school settings and is providing usefully robust evaluation of the school's work in support of the governing body.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Cartwright".

Brian Cartwright
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2010

- Improve the progress pupils make, particularly that of lower attainers and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, by ensuring appropriately challenging work is set and that individual education plans are used more effectively.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring assessment information is used more effectively in lesson planning, and marking consistently informs pupils how they can improve their work.
- Ensure that managers and teachers use assessment data more effectively to set appropriately challenging targets for different groups of pupils.