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10 July 2013

Mr C James  
Headteacher  
Windsor Park CofE (C) Middle School  
Springfield Road  
Uttoxeter  
ST14 7JX

Dear Mr James

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Windsor Park CofE (C) Middle School**

Following my visit to your school on 9 July 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. 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 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, students from Year 5, 6, 7 and 8, the Chair and four members of the Governing Body. Meetings were also held with the school improvement partner, the acting head of English, the data manager, the acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher who are starting in September 2013 to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated along with recent information on student achievement.

### **Context**

You, and your two assistant headteachers, are retiring at the end of the summer term 2013. The governing body has appointed a deputy headteacher from a local high school to be acting headteacher for a term until the arrival of the new headteacher in January 2014. There will be an acting deputy headteacher for the

autumn term 2013. This is an internal appointment. The governing body have only recently begun the external review recommended in the inspection report.

## **Main findings**

You and your senior leaders have produced an action plan which accurately identifies how the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection will be addressed. However, the action plan does not have measurable targets and dates when these targets will be achieved. This prevents governors, and senior leaders, from checking whether these goals are met and that students are making the expected progress. The acting headteacher, in collaboration with the local authority, is in the process of improving this action plan.

You, together with other senior leaders are not responding to weaknesses in students' progress with sufficient urgency. The latest data shows that across the school, students continue to make inadequate progress in reading and writing.

The systems for checking the work of staff are not rigorous. When observing teaching and reviewing students' work, you and other senior leaders do not focus enough on the impact teachers are having on different groups of students' learning. This is leading to an over generous view of the quality of teaching in the school. Students said that their learning varies across the school and that teachers' marking does not help them know how to improve their work. Students said that some of their books hadn't been marked since March 2013. This was checked and confirmed by HMI during the visit.

Governors meet to discuss the progress of students. However, the information they receive from you and other leaders is not detailed enough. One governor said that the data they receive 'is baffling'. This stops them from asking searching questions about the progress of different groups of students and checking how well senior leaders are helping all students to make better progress.

Governors recognise that they haven't responded to the school's weaknesses with sufficient urgency. The delayed review of governance has prevented governors from identifying and tackling weaknesses within the governing body.

The local authority have arranged for a local leader of education to work with the school from September 2013. The delay in arranging this provision has not helped the school's need for rapid and sustained improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- ensure the school improvement plan identifies: clear and specific actions, measurable milestones and deadlines, who is responsible for measuring the impact of the actions and how the support of the local leader of education will be used in improving student achievement
- ensure that leaders joining the school and the leadership team take urgent action to ensure all students make faster progress especially in writing
- introduce, from September 2013, regular student progress checks and present this information in a clear and explicit way to governors so that they can check the impact senior leaders and teachers are having on students' achievement
- work with the local authority to ensure that governors develop the knowledge, skills and understanding to ask school leaders more searching questions, robustly challenge the school data and to monitor, evaluate and review the impact of teaching on the progress and attainment of students
- improve the knowledge, skills and understanding of all senior and middle leaders so that they are able to rigorously check students' progress, monitor the quality of teaching and follow up concerns quickly.

I would like to meet with the full Governing Body and new senior leadership team as soon as possible in September 2013 to discuss the findings from this visit, to ensure the school action plan is fit for purpose and to review the progress of governors in fulfilling their role in monitoring the school's progress in improving the achievement of students.

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

### **External support**

The school received money from the local authority to fund external support after the recent inspection. The support was not bought in and the school was not challenged by the local authority. A local leader of education will start in September 2013. The local authority is now commissioning training for governors on understanding data, roles and responsibilities and structures and procedures for monitoring learning and teaching.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Staffordshire.

Yours sincerely

Peter Humphries  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**