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Mr Dale Jackson  
Executive Principal  
Clacton Coastal Academy  
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Essex  
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Dear Mr Jackson

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Clacton Coastal Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 11 June 2019, 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 to 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.

Senior leaders, governors and the trust are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- rapidly secure consistently good-quality teaching, across subjects and year groups, so that all pupils make strong progress, especially pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), disadvantaged pupils and boys
- ensure that teachers apply the school's literacy strategy effectively in all subjects
- use all the available information to pinpoint effective strategies, including ongoing work with parents, to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly and that exclusion rates reduce
- improve communication links with parents, so that they understand the procedures they need to follow if they have a concern and the actions the school is taking to deal with the issues they raise.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you, senior leaders, including the chair of governors and the national director of secondary schools for the Academies Enterprise Trust, to discuss the actions taken since the previous inspection. I also met with a group of teachers and a group of Year 7 pupils to hear their views about the work of the school. Jointly with one of your vice-principals, I observed pupils learning in lessons and looked at their books. I spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority and informally with pupils at break and lunchtimes. I also looked at your self-evaluation, improvement plans, safeguarding arrangements and other documentation linked to the school's performance.

## **Context**

You currently have senior leadership oversight of Clacton Coastal Academy and another school in the trust. There have been significant leadership and staffing changes at the school since the previous inspection. You were appointed to the executive principal role in October 2019. Senior leadership capacity to improve the school has been strengthened again this year through the recruitment of three new vice principals. A new principal is due to join the Clacton team on 1 July 2019. Staffing turbulence has settled and all vacant teaching posts have now been filled. Consequently, there are fewer occasions when the services of supply staff are needed. Pupils welcome this change.

Year 11 pupils and students in the sixth form were on examination leave during the monitoring inspection.

## **Main findings**

With the support of governors and the trust, you have established a process for planning improvement that prioritises the actions needed to support the journey towards becoming a good school. Plans are suitably focused on the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

You have ensured that leaders' ambition and high expectations are communicated well across all aspects of the school's work. Nevertheless, you recognise that there is still much more to do to ensure that all groups of pupils make the progress they should across subjects. This is because pupils' progress, by the end of key stage 4, has been below the national average for the last two years, especially for pupils with SEND, boys and disadvantaged pupils. In the sixth form, students made stronger progress on applied general qualification routes than they did with A levels in 2018.

In making the necessary changes to accelerate improvement, you have ensured that middle leaders report directly to a member of the senior leadership team. Lines of accountability and roles and responsibilities in securing development plan targets

are much clearer. Frequent checks on pupils' learning through lesson observations and reviews of their work are helping to pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses in provision. Leaders take appropriate action when teaching falls short of your agreed standards. Work with other schools and subject specialists in the trust is ensuring that good practice is shared.

Through targeted professional development for all staff and a more stable workforce, teaching is beginning to improve overall. However, the quality of teaching across subjects remains variable at this stage. You know that feedback to teachers on their practice is not always focused sharply on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. Appropriately, you have identified this as a theme for ongoing development.

A high proportion of pupils join the school in Year 7 with literacy skills below age-related expectations. The school's approach to teaching literacy was a concern raised in the previous inspection. A lead practitioner in English was appointed in January 2019 to help manage this issue. With her support, work is under way to establish a whole-school literacy strategy and to provide training for non-specialist teachers.

New checks identify the gaps in pupils' literacy skills so that interventions can be tailored more precisely to meet individual needs. In-school assessment information suggests that reading standards, often from low starting points, are beginning to rise in key stage 3. The current Year 7 pupils were especially positive about the support they receive to improve their reading.

Staff have welcomed the necessary and decisive action you have taken to improve pupils' behaviour. Teachers told me that the school has come through a 'massive' change in culture. They now feel empowered to think more deeply about their teaching because less time is wasted in managing the occurrence of unacceptable defiance and outbursts from pupils. They appreciate the high presence of senior leaders who are responsive and readily available to support them if required.

The pupils I spoke with around the school could explain the behaviour policy to me in some detail. They agreed with the staff's view that behaviour has improved because of the changes that you have introduced. This was reflected in the evidence that I saw during the monitoring inspection. Pupils said that staff are more consistent now in applying the new rewards and sanctions set out in the behaviour management policy.

While your own records show that incidents of poor behaviour are reducing, a significant proportion of pupils are still temporarily excluded from school. This is especially the case for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. The number of pupils permanently excluded from school was well above the national average in recent years. To reduce these figures and to maximise the time pupils spend in learning, you have established your own internal intervention programme. This aims

to provide short-term behavioural, pastoral and academic support to get pupils back to their lessons quickly. Project work with the local authority is supporting the development of in-school alternative provision. This will focus on providing targeted support for pupils who may be at risk of permanent exclusion.

Too many pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should. Overall attendance is below the national average. Persistent absence remains too high. Together with other senior leaders, governors and the trust, you have a sustained a relentless focus on improving attendance. You are clear about the important role that parents have in making sure that pupils attend. Consequently, you have taken steps to improve the way you communicate with them about your concerns. The local authority provides additional support through, for example, home visits and close working with your attendance team. Shared good practice from other schools in the trust is helping leaders to refine your strategies for improving attendance. There are some signs of success with individual pupils. However, there is still some distance to travel to secure the attendance rates you expect.

Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Safety officers are on duty to ensure that pupils move safely between the school sites at lesson changeover times. There is a high staff presence at the start and end of the school day. Staff maintain effective links with external agencies, including the police, health professionals and children's services

School leaders take any complaints about safeguarding very seriously. The school's records and the local authority's investigations show that due processes are followed. Complaints are a standing agenda item at governors' meetings. However, parents do not routinely follow the school's complaints procedure, which is set out clearly on the website. This restricts the opportunity for you and other leaders to act promptly, or to communicate the actions you are taking to deal with the issues raised.

### **External support**

You and your senior leaders make good use of all available resources to secure the school's improvement journey. Since the previous inspection, the trust has considerably extended the scope of the support it provides for school leadership. This includes changes to governance arrangements brokered by the trust. The changes have strengthened the support and challenge governors offer to senior leaders about the quality of provision. Additional resources have been assigned by the trust to extend leadership capacity. Close working with trust subject specialists is helping middle leaders in English and mathematics to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility. Expertise and project support from the local authority is enhancing the school's efforts to improve pupils' attendance and to reduce the risk of temporary and permanent exclusion.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive

officer of the Academies Enterprise Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Christine Dick  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**