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5 July 2021

Keith Howard  
Writhlington School  
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Dear Mr Howard

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

Following my visit to your school on 24 June 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. I discussed the impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in my evaluation.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

### **Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action in order for the school to become a good school.**

The school should take further action to:

- use assessment effectively to help pupils know and remember more of the curriculum.

## **Context**

For a period of time following the previous section 5 inspection, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust performed the role of headteacher on an interim basis. You have since been appointed as permanent headteacher. You took up post on 8 June 2021.

Since September 2020, two assistant headteachers have been appointed to your senior leadership team. They hold responsibilities for the provision for disadvantaged pupils and literacy. In addition, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) joined the school. A new curriculum leader for English has been appointed from within the trust and will join the school in September 2021.

## **Main findings**

You have only held the role of headteacher at Writhlington School for a short time, yet you have clear plans to tackle the remaining areas for improvement. You have recruited committed leaders into key roles, for example to lead on whole-school literacy. You have built on the work of the trust and the senior team to improve the behaviour of pupils. The atmosphere in lessons is calm and purposeful. Pupils are keen to show what they know.

You have given a clear message to pupils and staff about the importance of reading. Pupils are beginning to read more regularly. Tutors play a greater role in encouraging a love of reading. Pupils who need to improve their reading benefit from extra practice. The SENCo arranges effective support for pupils who have gaps in their phonics knowledge.

Following recent training, teachers are trying new approaches to developing pupils' literacy. They rightly plan opportunities for pupils to read texts of genuine interest to experts in their subjects. Increasingly, teachers model the style of writing that is valued in their subject. However, this development is in its infancy. Some subject leaders are not yet sure what priority to give to this within the existing aims of their curriculum.

You have identified a need to bring greater coherence to the school's curriculum. There is a well-sequenced mathematics curriculum in place. In English, trust leaders have built a high-quality programme, but the school has not yet fully implemented this. Increasingly, leaders in different subjects are considering how they can help pupils to learn and remember the most useful curriculum content. A key barrier to this is the school's approach to assessment. Currently, teachers do not make effective use of assessment to help pupils embed knowledge securely. Pupils in key stage 3 complete regular assessments. However, teachers focus too much on checking their work in the light of what is expected of them in GCSE examinations. As a result, these pupils spend valuable time learning exam technique instead of curriculum content. Furthermore, teachers do not pay enough attention when pupils

do not learn key knowledge. They do not adjust their teaching plans accordingly. Equally, subject leaders do not adapt their curriculum plans in response to assessment information because they do not know which content pupils found the most difficult to understand or remember.

### **Additional support**

The CEO of the multi-academy trust provides considerable support to the school. This has led to improving standards and has been influential in developing leaders' thinking about the curriculum. The school has adopted a high-quality mathematics programme developed by the trust.

The governing body has commissioned useful training for teachers focused on literacy development.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings you, your senior leadership team, the CEO of the multi-academy trust and the chair of the local governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I met with leaders of English and literacy from the school and the multi-academy trust. In addition, I met with the curriculum leaders in history, geography and science. I visited lessons, including reading support sessions. I met with a group of pupils from Year 7 and Year 8 to discuss their experiences.

To monitor the school's work to safeguard pupils, I scrutinised the single central record of adults working with the school and met with the designated safeguarding lead.

I considered 119 responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View, including 38 free-text comments. I also took into account 50 responses to the staff questionnaire.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of the Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bath and North East Somerset Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Lydia Pride  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**