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Rebecca Warhurst  
Head of School  
South Shore Academy  
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Lancashire  
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Dear Mrs Warhurst

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to South Shore Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 22 April 2022, 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 pandemic began. I discussed the ongoing 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:

**The school continues to require improvement. Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action toward the school becoming a good school.**

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that all teachers consider more carefully the knowledge that pupils should learn in order to successfully reach curriculum end points

- identify the existing weaknesses in the support that staff provide to pupils with special educational needs and or disabilities (SEND) in lessons so that future training and support is more focused on helping these pupils to access the curriculum.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, one member of the local governing body (LGB) has left and a new governor has joined. You were appointed as head of school in October 2021. Two new deputy heads of school took up their posts in January 2020 and April 2022 respectively. A new operations manager was appointed in September 2021. You have undertaken a restructure of the roles within the senior leadership team. You are currently in the process of recruiting an assistant head of school.

Two subject leaders have joined the school since the last inspection. One has subsequently left. You are currently reviewing and restructuring the roles and responsibilities of some subject leaders. Four teachers have left the school. You have successfully appointed eight new teachers. You have also increased the number of learning support assistants from three to 12.

Throughout this academic year, there has been a high volume of staff and pupil absence as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Main findings**

You, and other leaders, including members of the LGB, are acutely aware of the reasons why pupils' attendance and achievement were not good enough in the past. Despite the challenges that you have faced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, you have made considerable progress in addressing many of these weaknesses.

You are taking appropriate steps to increase and develop leadership capacity. You, and other leaders, have an accurate understanding of the improvements that have been made since the previous inspection. You also have a clear insight into what further improvements are needed to ensure that pupils benefit from a good quality of education. This is reflected in the clear and purposeful school improvement plans. You and other leaders have the ambition, knowledge and skills needed to continue the school's improvement journey. Members of the LGB provide effective challenge and support. This is helping you and other leaders to successfully embed an increasingly positive culture of staff development.

You, and other leaders, continue to build on the more purposeful curriculum offer that was introduced shortly before the last inspection. You are ensuring that pupils in Years 7 to 9 benefit from an appropriately broad and balanced curriculum. You are also making sure that pupils in Years 10 and 11 can study a similarly broad and balanced curriculum if they wish. However, you know that the majority of pupils are not currently choosing to do this. This is because weaknesses in the quality of education in some subjects mean that

they prefer to study other subjects. You have appropriate plans to address this issue so that pupils are equally motivated to study all subjects.

You are successfully supporting subject leaders to strengthen subject curriculums. Subject leaders are much clearer about what pupils should know and be able to do in their curriculum areas. Subject leaders ensure that teachers deliver and assess subject content in a sensible order.

You, and other leaders, are supporting teachers to deliver the curriculum more effectively. Teachers are benefiting from individualised training and coaching. They are positive about how this is helping them to strengthen their teaching skills and subject-specific knowledge. However, teachers are at different stages in applying their training. Some teachers do not think carefully enough about the knowledge that pupils need to successfully achieve curriculum goals. This means that some pupils miss out on key subject knowledge. This continues to hamper how well they can recall important subject content.

You are helping staff to better understand how to support the needs of pupils with SEND. For example, staff have a greater understanding of the range of SEND needs that pupils have. Staff are beginning to increase their repertoire of what they can do to help support these pupils. However, staff have a limited understanding of how to adapt the delivery of the curriculum so that pupils with SEND can consistently reach the same ambitious goals as other pupils in the school. You recognise that you do not have a clear enough insight into staff's strengths and weaknesses in this area. Consequently, staff training about how to support the needs of pupils with SEND is not as targeted or specific as it needs to be.

You, and other leaders, have further strengthened the support that pupils receive to help them read fluently and accurately. You have ensured that pupils' reading abilities are rigorously assessed and that expert support is in place for those pupils who find reading difficult. This is having a demonstrable impact on the progress of pupils who are at the earliest stages of learning to read. Pupils of all reading abilities enjoy the positive culture of reading to learn and reading for pleasure that you have firmly embedded.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, you have secured consistent improvements to pupils' attendance over the last year. You make effective use of well-designed systems to identify trends in attendance and support pupils' specific needs. You are keen to strengthen the pupils' rates of attendance further.

Your work to ensure that alternative provision (AP) is used appropriately has been strengthened further. You ensure that leaders are more diligent in considering how pupils' individual needs are supported by improvements to school provision as well as carefully selected AP. Staff work closely with pupils, parents, carers and providers to ensure that provision is suitable and of benefit to pupils.

## **Additional support**

You, and other leaders, work effectively with the trust to identify the support that staff need. You have used the support from the trust to develop leaders' understanding of their roles and their leadership skills. This is strengthening leadership capacity. The trust's support has also been used effectively to strengthen subject leaders' understanding of their subject curriculums. This means that they are better equipped to support the development of staff who deliver their subjects.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders. I also met with groups of subject leaders, staff and pupils. I spoke with members of the LGB, representatives of the multi-academy trust and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I scrutinised recent developments to the school's curriculum. I also considered the school improvement plan, records of safeguarding, pupils' attendance and alternative provision.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body, the chief executive officer of the Bright Futures Educational Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Blackpool. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Pennington  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**