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Paul Letch  
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Dear Mr Letch

### **Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Huxlow Science College**

Following my visit with Aoife Galletly, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 28 and 29 June 2022, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the 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 since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in November 2021. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the third routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. We discussed the ongoing impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in our evaluation.

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

**The school continues to be inadequate. Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.**

**The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.**

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Davies  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 28 and 29 June 2022**

### **Context**

Since the previous inspection, trustees have restructured the responsibilities of senior leaders. A new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has been appointed. A deputy head has left the school and three new assistant headteachers will start in September 2022. The school is currently preparing to become part of a multi-academy trust.

### **The progress made towards the removal of serious weaknesses designation**

Senior leaders lead with a strong moral purpose and are focused on improving provision for all pupils. They have worked to bring about change since the previous inspection. Leaders have acted quickly.

Leaders' approach to school improvement includes the involvement of teachers and support staff. For example, leaders have worked with staff to review and develop the school's mission and values. Together, they have determined the school's values as being, 'ambition, respect and pride'. These values form the foundation for the school's new vision, 'Thriving through excellence'.

Leaders are focused on establishing a positive culture of continuous improvement. A core group of staff has been trained to lead on improvement priorities across the school. These staff have thought carefully about how to bring about sustained improvements. Leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and the areas needing improvement. The school improvement plan is well thought through.

The trustees have strengthened leadership across the school since the previous inspection. The senior leadership team has been restructured to increase its capacity to focus on the school's key improvement priorities. Clear lines of accountability and responsibility are being developed for senior leaders. This clarification is helping to ensure that leaders now have a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities. In turn, this is helping them to focus more precisely on what they must do to bring about the required improvements. However, members of the current senior leadership team are still overburdened with responsibilities. New senior leaders have been appointed but are yet to start work at the school.

Trustees know the school well. They now understand the need to be outward looking and work more effectively with other schools. Trustees are working to support the school to become part of a multi-academy trust.

Leaders have built capacity in the safeguarding team. Safeguarding leaders understand their responsibilities. They know pupils very well. However, some safeguarding leaders are still overburdened with too many responsibilities. They have not been able to check the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding practices thoroughly. They have not ensured

that they respond to all safeguarding concerns in a timely manner. Leaders work with external agencies to ensure that pupils get additional help when needed. However, they do not maintain detailed, up-to-date safeguarding records.

Staff are suitably trained in relation to keeping pupils safe. They know their responsibilities. Every pupil has a trusted adult they can turn to. Many pupils spoke positively about this and know who to turn to should they need to share any worries or concerns.

Leaders have ensured that they undertake pre-employment checks of any new staff, before these staff begin to work at the school. Those leaders who manage the recruitment process have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and the purpose of safer recruitment. Trustees regularly check the school's recruitment procedures.

Leaders have focused on improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes since the previous inspection. They have set higher behavioural expectations. They have shared the new behaviour management system with pupils, parents and carers, and staff. Pupils understand the 'ask, tell, remove' approach. However, not all staff use this approach consistently. The new approach to behaviour management is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' behaviour. Most pupils conduct themselves politely, calmly and respectfully. Leaders' analysis shows that the number of suspensions is reducing, as are incidences of bullying. Many pupils recognise that behaviour is slowly improving. However, low-level disruption and off-task behaviour occur in some lessons. This adversely affects pupils' learning. Pupils say that they still hear swearing, homophobic comments and racist language around school. Most staff challenge prejudicial behaviours and are trying to establish a culture of respect. However, some pupils persist with disruptive and antisocial behaviours.

Leaders have continued to develop the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. They provide pupils with opportunities to learn about equality, diversity and fundamental British values. The newly introduced timetabled PSHE education lesson and the improved resources have led to pupils gaining from better teaching of the planned PSHE education curriculum. PSHE education is now complemented with a well-structured approach to tutor time and themed assemblies. In the Year 9 assembly, pupils were challenged to reflect deeply about the school's values and prejudice. They considered their responsibility to report injustice, such as racism, when they see and hear it happening.

Leaders have started to review the school's curriculum. Pupils have the opportunity to study a range of subjects. However, leaders have not ensured that the school's curriculum is broad and ambitious enough for pupils in both key stages 3 and 4. Subject leaders are reviewing and developing their curriculums. They are beginning to identify the key knowledge that they want pupils to learn. There is much work to be done to raise expectations and ensure that all subject curriculums are ambitious and well sequenced to enable all pupils to know and remember more over time.

Leaders have undertaken much work to improve the quality of teaching and assessment. They have developed a revised lesson structure, which they are beginning to put in place. However, there is much inconsistency in how teachers use this new approach to teaching, both within and between subjects. Leaders have clear plans to improve the quality of teaching and assessment further.

Leaders have taken steps to improve the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There have been significant improvements to how leaders identify pupils with SEND, and their needs. Leaders have clear plans in place to develop this provision by fully involving pupils and parents, as well as ensuring that teachers understand and meet their responsibilities. Some of this work is at an early stage and the impact of it is yet to be seen in these pupils' learning. Leaders have also sharpened their approach to supporting disadvantaged pupils. They are determined to overcome barriers for pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils.

Staff benefit from training, including in relation to developing leadership and improving teaching. The vast majority of the staff enjoy working at the school, feel supported by leaders, and are proud to be part of the school. They understand the part they play in improving this school.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Trustees must build leadership capacity to enable safeguarding leaders to fulfil their responsibilities fully and in a timely manner, and to maintain thorough safeguarding records.
- Leaders must review the school's curriculum to make sure that the curriculums in both key stages 3 and 4 are sufficiently ambitious for all pupils in terms of the breadth and depth of study.

### **Additional support**

The school has drawn on support from two multi-academy trusts. Leaders believe that the partnerships with these trusts have been helpful in developing the quality of leadership. The school has commissioned reviews from other organisations and professionals. Leaders recognise that these have helped improve some aspects of safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.

### **Evidence**

The inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the chair of trustees, groups of pupils, teachers and support staff. They reviewed responses to Ofsted Parent View and the staff questionnaire. They visited lessons, met heads of department and reviewed curriculum planning. They met with safeguarding leaders. They met with the SENCo and reviewed the provision for pupils with SEND. They reviewed safeguarding policies and records.