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Matthew Morgan
Head of school
Wicklea Academy
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Dear Mr Morgan

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Wicklea Academy

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 6 October 2022, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and took place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous graded (section 5) inspections.

During the inspection, I discussed with you, other senior leaders, the CEO of the multi-academy trust, members of the local academy board and other staff, the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work and scrutinised school documents, including the school improvement plan. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Wicklea Academy continues to require improvement. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that the school's approach to setting expectations of what pupils can achieve enables all pupils to reach ambitious curriculum goals over time; and
- ensure that leaders provide staff with the necessary training to adapt their teaching so that it consistently builds on what pupils need to know next.

Main findings

There have been several staff changes since the previous inspection. There are five new members of staff.

You, along with your staff, are working steadily to address the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. For example, you have introduced a new approach to teaching phonics. All staff have been trained, which means that this is proving to be increasingly effective. Pupils who need to catch up with reading now receive explicit teaching of phonics. This is helping pupils to increase their reading fluency and to apply their phonics knowledge to spell accurately. However, there are some weaknesses in the content and implementation of other aspects of the school's agreed reading curriculum.

Your work to address the necessary changes to the wider curriculum is starting to take hold. Nonetheless, it is taking time for leaders to revamp subject content and consider carefully what knowledge is taught and when. For example, your work to upgrade the design technology and the music curriculums is just starting. This means that some intended changes to the school's curriculum are not yet influencing the teaching that pupils receive week-on-week. Pupils I spoke with are very positive about their learning and remember a lot of what they have been taught. This is stronger in some subjects, such as history, geography and science. However, pupils recognise that they learn more in some subjects than others.

Leaders have been successful in raising expectations of what pupils will achieve in Year 6. However, in some other year groups, expectations of what pupils should achieve over time remain too low. Senior leaders' strategic oversight of curriculum quality is not yet sufficiently strong.

Staff are very positive about the additional support they receive, such as attending network meetings and working with staff from other schools in the multi-academy trust. Members of the local academy council work closely with school staff to check leaders' work against the intended actions on the school improvement plan. However, there is a lack of sufficient rigour, which limits the breadth and, in some cases, the accuracy of the information trustees receive.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer or equivalent of the Waycroft Multi-Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bristol. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Julie Carrington
His Majesty's Inspector