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Rachel Perks
Principal
New College Worcester (NMSS)
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Dear Mrs Perks

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of New College Worcester (NMSS)

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 15 November 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 was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in April 2022.

During the inspection, Amjid Zaman, Ofsted Inspector (OI), and I discussed with you and other senior leaders and governors 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. We also visited lessons, spoke with pupils and staff and scrutinised documents. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

New College Worcester (NMSS) remains inadequate and has serious weaknesses. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the category of concern to be removed.

Safeguarding is effective.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

This inspection focused particularly on safeguarding and the leadership of safeguarding. Since the last inspection, you have been appointed as the new principal. Six new governors have joined the school's governing body and one governor has left. The

school's safeguarding team has expanded. This includes the appointment of an operational safeguarding lead. This person will join the school in January 2023.

You and your leaders, along with governors, are taking swift and effective action to address the significant weaknesses in safeguarding identified at the previous inspection. These actions mean that safeguarding is now effective. Pupils are kept safe, and those who need help get it quickly. Nonetheless, it is still early days. Many of these changes are relatively new. You and your team recognise that they need more time to embed and sustain these recent improvements.

Leaders have clarified their expectations around how staff should report safeguarding issues. This has included clear guidance on the information staff should record when passing on their concerns. Leaders, including governors, monitor the impact of this work well. For example, they make fortnightly checks on the quality of referrals and act swiftly to support staff who do not meet their expectations. All of this means that the quality of referrals is improving, records of safeguarding concerns are more detailed, and leaders have a more complete picture of concerns related to individual pupils. You and your leaders use this information well to ensure that individual pupils get the help they need. However, your leaders do not systematically look at safeguarding information in order to identify whole-school patterns that may exist. This means that they are unable to tailor safeguarding training or the school's curriculum to any specific issues that may need addressing.

Since your appointment, you have wasted no time in further raising staff awareness of the importance of safeguarding. You have ensured that all adults know that safeguarding is the 'golden thread' that runs through the school. Staff are appreciative of this clarity. In particular, you have ensured that training increasingly focuses on the additional vulnerabilities of pupils at the school. This approach is working well. It is helping to build staff's expertise in understanding the contextual safeguarding risks faced by pupils. In addition, it is ensuring that staff can spot the less obvious signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Several staff commented on how 'useful' and 'helpful' they had found recent training.

In the past, leaders have been too slow to ensure vulnerable pupils get the right help at the right time. The safeguarding team has expanded since the previous inspection. This is adding to the capacity of the safeguarding team and means that leaders can now respond to concerns in a timely fashion. This is helping to keep pupils safe.

You and your leaders have thought carefully about how best to ensure vulnerable pupils with mental health needs are kept safe. Risk assessments for these pupils now include more precise information. They clearly state why pupils are at risk and identify the signs that a pupil may need support. Leaders have ensured that all staff can easily access this information and that they are clear about what to do if they have any concerns.

Governors have improved their knowledge and oversight of safeguarding. Several new governors have been appointed. Many of these new governors have been selected

because they understand the school's safeguarding responsibilities well. This is helping the governing body to have a greater level of expertise. In addition, governors are now using a more comprehensive range of evidence to help them understand what is working well and what needs improvement. Governors are starting to use this information to challenge and hold you and your leaders to account for aspects of safeguarding. For example, members of the governing body recently questioned leaders about how well the curriculum was supporting pupils to keep themselves safe.

School leaders and governors have greatly valued the support of a range of external consultants. These consultants are helping leaders, including governors, to identify strengths and weaknesses in the school's safeguarding arrangements.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Worcester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Stevens
His Majesty's Inspector