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Brendan Hesketh
Interim Principal
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Dear Mr Hesketh

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Montpelier High School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 6 December 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 March 2022. The focus of this monitoring inspection was the safeguarding arrangements at the school and the management of behaviour.

During the inspection, I discussed with you, other school leaders and the chief executive officer and deputy chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, 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 observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with groups of pupils. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Montpelier High School remains inadequate and has serious weaknesses. Leaders have made insufficient progress to improve the school.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Since the inspection, an interim principal has been appointed, as has a new chair of governors. The safeguarding team has been expanded to include a new designated safeguarding leader, who works alongside additional deputy designated safeguarding leaders.

Leaders have taken some action to address the areas of weakness identified in the previous section 5 inspection report. For example, leaders ensure that all staff receive safeguarding training and this is monitored closely. Additionally, a quality of welfare and safeguarding governor sub-committee has been established to provide strategic oversight. However, these changes are still in their infancy.

Leaders have also made changes to the ways in which they record information about pupils they know are at risk of harm. However, there is a lack of analysis of incidents or concerns to check follow-up procedures are appropriate and keeping pupils safe. In addition, during this inspection, I identified examples of where known concerns about pupils had not been accurately recorded in line with the school's policy. Crucially, many pupils report that they do not have a trusted adult with whom they could share their concerns. Furthermore, many pupils say that they find it difficult to disclose worries about their mental health. Many pupils state that they struggle with this aspect of their well-being and do not receive the support they request. Pupils also spoke of the prevalence of self-harm. Therefore, leaders' actions have not been sufficient to make pupils feel secure enough to tell staff of their concerns. The evidence from this inspection continues to raise serious concerns about the school's safeguarding arrangements.

Leaders outline a vision for the success of all pupils at the school. Their focus is to prioritise the quality of welfare, alongside the quality of education. However, their plans to ensure equity of support for pupils' academic, social and emotional well-being are still in their infancy. Overwhelmingly, pupils state that the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum is ineffective in helping them to prepare for the world beyond school. They state that it does not support them to know how to manage their well-being. Leaders have had some success in the sixth form and in Year 7. Sixth-form students study a well-structured PSHE curriculum. Some pupils in Year 7 state that the PSHE curriculum has helped them to know how to resolve conflict.

Leaders have reduced incidents of bullying. Most pupils report that bullying is not a significant issue at the school. Leaders have revised how they establish an overview of incidents, so that they can identify patterns of behaviour more sharply. Leaders have, as a result, identified that there is a disproportionate number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding who are removed from lessons to manage their behaviour. Leaders have begun to address the issues that underpin these behavioural concerns. However, it is early days.

Leaders have commissioned an external safeguarding consultant to provide ongoing support.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Venturers 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

Susan Aykin
His Majesty's Inspector