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Gary Lewis
Principal
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Dear Mr Lewis

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Ortu Gable Hall School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 2 February 2023, 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 May 2022.

During the inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, trustees and governors to discuss the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We considered the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also held discussions with pupils, toured the school to observe the quality of behaviour and looked at pupils' work. During my visit, I looked at a range of documents, including curriculum plans, improvement plans and leaders' evaluations of the progress made towards eliminating the school's serious weaknesses. I also scrutinized policies, child protection records and the single central record. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Ortu Gable Hall School 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.

The school should take further action to:

- Ensure that all staff are vigilant to the signs of potential harm and act upon concerns as they arise.
- Make sure that those responsible for governance challenge leaders more robustly about leaders' work to improve safeguarding.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

A new chief executive officer and a new principal took up their posts in September 2022. Trustees have also been working with the Department for Education to find a different multi-academy trust for the school. During this inspection, I focused on leaders' arrangements for safeguarding. I also considered leaders' progress towards offering a broad curriculum.

In September 2022, leaders introduced a programme of training for leaders and staff about their safeguarding duties, with guidance about how to carry them out. Leaders developed their own understanding of government guidance about safeguarding by taking advice from external specialists. Leaders have ensured that all staff have participated in appropriate training. Leaders have assessed staff's knowledge and understanding of their training. Leaders use this information to provide targeted training for staff who have not fully grasped something. Leaders' records show that while more concerns are being raised about vulnerable pupils by members of support staff, and records show that leaders take appropriate action to support these pupils, this is not the case for all teachers. Although teachers have received training about their safeguarding responsibilities, records show that not all teachers record concerns when it is clear that pupils are at risk of potential harm. This includes pupils highlighted as being at risk of criminal exploitation.

Leaders regularly monitor the effectiveness of staff's use of the new approaches to safeguarding. Leaders' monitoring, however, is not sufficiently precise to help leaders know how well they are developing an effective safeguarding culture. Leaders have not identified when staff are not vigilant to the risks pupils face. Senior leaders have not questioned why many teaching staff do not record concerns about pupils. Senior leaders have not held other leaders to account for the vigilance of teaching staff. This continues to leave vulnerable pupils at risk.

Leaders and those responsible for governance have introduced a clear system for recording confidentially any concerns raised about the conduct of staff. Appropriate checks to ensure adults at school are suitable to work with children and young people are in place. Leaders ensure that the record of these checks is accurately maintained.

Those responsible for governance have not placed sufficient focus on the progress leaders have made towards the development of an effective safeguarding culture. Minutes of the trust board meetings show that the board has been largely concerned with the school's

future in a different multi-academy trust. Individual governors from the local governing body have made visits to monitor leaders' progress. On these occasions, governors have not challenged leaders robustly enough to ensure that safeguarding becomes effective. Governors have provided the challenge necessary to ensure safeguarding case files and communications with external agencies are well maintained.

Leaders have taken positive steps forward to ensure pupils study a broad curriculum. It is still the case, however, that leaders do not offer a curriculum with sufficient breadth. Leaders have started recruiting specialists to offer subjects not previously taught in the curriculum. For example, staff now teach computing to pupils in Years 7 and 8. Leaders also provide opportunities for all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to learn a modern foreign language. Leaders have made changes to the curriculum for religious education (RE). All pupils study RE, though the curriculum plans are not coherent and this impacts upon how well RE is delivered.

In September 2022, trustees secured the support of two consultants. Leaders have found the consultants' help useful in developing the school's improvement plan and providing an external view of the progress leaders are making towards eliminating the serious weaknesses at the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Ortu Federation multi-academy trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Thurrock Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Al Mistrano
His Majesty's Inspector