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Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
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Mrs Sally Wilson
Headteacher
The Blandford School
Milldown Road
Blandford Forum
Dorset
DT11 7SQ

Dear Mrs Wilson

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of The Blandford 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 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 and other senior leaders, governors, the local authority and educational consultant, 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 met with groups of pupils to discuss their experiences at the school. I also spoke with staff and considered the responses to the pupil and staff surveys issued at the time of the inspection. I scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's strategic plans. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

The Blandford School 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:

- embed the anti-bullying strategy, so that more pupils have confidence that incidents of bullying will be addressed effectively.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, the roles of senior leaders have been reorganised to increase the focus on improving the school's culture, including pupils' behaviour and attitudes. In January 2022, a special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) coordinator joined the school. A new chair of governors was appointed in September 2022.

Leaders have acted with urgency to launch an enhanced anti-bullying strategy. Pupils and students in the sixth form have played an important part in the implementation of this strategy. There are now more ways for pupils to report bullying. Increasingly, pupils are making use of these. However, a substantial minority of pupils do not yet have confidence that, if they report bullying, it will be dealt with effectively. Therefore, there is still more to do to reassure pupils.

During the monitoring visit, I discussed with leaders the ways in which they gain an understanding of pupils' behaviour and attitudes. Leaders have strengthened their systems for gathering information. For example, leaders are now more sharply focused on the experiences of pupils with SEND. As a result, they are better able to support pupils with SEND to attend school regularly. Governors now receive useful information about what is happening in the school. Therefore, they support and challenge school leaders more effectively.

The quality of education was judged to be good at the last inspection. However, leaders have identified a need to strengthen the provision for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. Leaders are supporting staff to meet the needs of these pupils more successfully. Pupils who have fallen behind with their reading receive extra teaching, which helps them to catch up.

The school is in receipt of support from Dorset local authority. In addition, leaders have secured the support of an independent consultant, who is advising the school on pupils' personal development and well-being. Leaders are using these services to check on the impact of their ongoing work to address the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection.

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 Dorset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Lydia Pride
His Majesty's Inspector

