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Nat Parnell
Principal
Huish Episcopi Academy
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Dear Mr Parnell

Special measures monitoring inspection of Huish Episcopi Academy

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 25 and 26 April 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 require special measures following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in November 2022.

The inspection team discussed with you, senior leaders and governors the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We also spoke with pupils and staff, observed the school's work, held meetings with other staff and reviewed documents. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Huish Episcopi remains inadequate and requires special measures. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the category of concern to be removed. I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Safeguarding was judged to be ineffective at the previous inspection. Therefore, the focus of this first monitoring visit was to consider the effectiveness of safeguarding. Since the previous inspection, an interim principal has been appointed, as has a new chair of governors. Additional leadership capacity has been put in place on an interim basis. There is a new special educational needs coordinator.

Leaders have prioritised pupils' safety since the previous inspection. They have set high expectations for pupils' conduct around the school site. Clear 'lines in the sand' mean that pupils know types of behaviour that are unacceptable. For example, pupils know that aggressive behaviour is not tolerated. Leaders have established effective routines for movement around the site. Pupils appreciate the high levels of adult supervision. This fosters positive relationships with staff and helps pupils to feel safe. Staff feel supported with managing pupils' behaviour. They recognise the impact of the improvements that leaders have made. As a result, the school site is typically calm and orderly.

Leaders have established a 'telling school' culture. They encourage pupils to report concerns to staff. Leaders ensure that staff report their concerns about pupils' welfare so that action is taken. Pupils feel that adults listen to them and are confident that they will resolve problems. For example, pupils know that there are serious consequences for bullying. Where concerns are of a safeguarding nature, staff follow clear procedures for reporting these to leaders. Leaders, in turn, take effective action to protect children. This includes work with external agencies and appropriate referrals to safeguarding partners.

Leaders have continued to ensure that there are suitable arrangements for the safe recruitment of staff. They have created a culture of vigilance and ensure that action is taken to safeguard pupils. As a result of improvements made by leaders, safeguarding is now effective.

Pupils are beginning to understand the importance of respectful relationships. Leaders have implemented a 'no hands on' policy, which is understood by pupils. Pupils say that discriminatory language still occurs, but it is no longer widespread. This echoes the observations of inspectors. Leaders have considered how to strengthen pupils' personal development, such as how they learn about equality and diversity. However, this work is in its infancy. More work is required to develop and embed a coherent curriculum that prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.

Governors have begun to hold leaders to account for their actions and priorities. However, their evaluation of the impact of the actions taken by school leaders is in its infancy. For example, they have ensured that leaders start to improve the identification of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and communication with their parents. However, it is too soon to fully evaluate the impact of these actions.

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

Yours sincerely

James Oldham
His Majesty's Inspector