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19 June 2023

Gary Lewis  
Principal  
Ortu Gable Hall School  
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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 10 May 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 second 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, Ofsted Inspectors Alan Gray, Jason Howard, Michael Skelly and Polly Lankester, and I discussed with you and other senior leaders, the CEO of the multi-academy trust, trustees 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 held discussions with subject leaders, teachers, members of support staff and pupils. During our visit, we visited lessons, considered curriculum documents, looked at pupils' work and considered improvement plans and leaders' evaluations. We also scrutinised policies, child protection records and the single central record. We have considered all this in coming to our 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 have high expectations of behaviour and manage pupils' behaviour effectively to eliminate the disruption to learning caused by unacceptable behaviour.

### **The progress made towards the removal of the serious weakness designation**

During this inspection, we focused on leaders' arrangements for safeguarding and leaders' progress towards providing effective programmes for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and relationships and sex education (RSE). We also considered leaders' approach to the teaching of reading and progress towards the development of a reading culture. Early in the inspection, we became aware of pupils' and parents' concerns about the management of pupils' behaviour. In response, we also considered pupils' behaviour in lessons and how well staff maintain purposeful learning environments.

Leaders have increased the profile of reading among pupils. Leaders have introduced many opportunities for pupils to enjoy reading. Pupils appreciate the improvements made to the library. Many more pupils use the library during social times. They understand the importance of reading. They carry reading books with them, and most appreciate the dedicated time during the week to read their own books.

Leaders have in place helpful support for pupils who are at an early stage of learning to read. However, leaders do not provide teachers with information about exactly what these pupils learn in the support sessions. As a result, teachers do not give these pupils the practice they need to master and apply what they learn in the support sessions. Similarly, teachers do not make sure that these pupils have access to texts that they can read successfully. Many pupils do not like reading because they find the texts they are given too difficult.

Leaders have taken positive steps forward to ensure pupils study coherently planned programmes in PSHE education and RSE. Leaders have created a dedicated team of PSHE and RSE teachers who have the training they need to deliver the curriculum effectively. The curriculum plans for PSHE and RSE are now well designed so that pupils can build over time their understanding of the topics they study. Leaders' curriculum includes regular opportunities for teachers to review key knowledge. As a result, pupils remember much of what has been taught. However, there are occasions when PSHE teachers and tutors teach different topics. When this happens, pupils sometimes do not understand or remember what has been taught.

During the inspection, pupils and parents let us know their concerns about the quality of behaviour. Pupils told us about, and we saw, unacceptable behaviour in too many lessons. While pupils learn in many lessons that are calm and purposeful, they also consistently experience lessons with persistent disruption. This makes learning in some lessons difficult, and sometimes impossible. Leaders have not ensured that staff have consistently

high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Leaders have also not secured a common approach to managing behaviour in classrooms. Consequently, in too many instances, behaviour disrupts learning, and this impacts on pupils' opportunity to achieve as well as they are able.

At my last visit, in February 2023, I found vulnerable pupils not well enough supported because too many staff did not understand the risks these pupils face. Some staff were also not alert to signs of potential harm and did not raise concerns with the designated safeguarding lead. This is no longer the case. Since my last visit, leaders have introduced more effective ways of checking that staff understand and carry out their safeguarding duties. Records show that staff take swift and appropriate action when concerns arise. Pupils told us that staff care for them well in school. They also said that staff take effective action to help them with difficult situations outside of school. Those responsible for governance have faced the weaknesses in safeguarding practices head on. They keep a close watch on safeguarding at the school. They ensure that they get the information they need to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school's provision. Governors and trustees challenge leaders effectively to ensure staff fulfil their safeguarding duties. Safeguarding is now effective.

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**