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Adam Edwards
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Dear Mr Edwards

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Huntcliff School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 4 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in April 2022.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other senior leaders, the school's leadership consultant, other staff and trustees 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 met teachers, classroom support assistants and non-teaching staff. I held meetings with pupils, observed breaktime, reviewed trustee minutes of meetings and scrutinised the school's single central record. I also considered feedback from parents on Ofsted Parent View. Other documents that include the post-Ofsted action plan, the school's development plan and self-evaluation form were also reviewed. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

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

The school should take further action to:

- ensure leaders' improvements to systems and processes to manage pupils' behaviour are used effectively in lessons
- ensure that there is sufficient leadership capacity to support the pace of improvement and provide certainty to the school community.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

In preparation for the monitoring visit, we agreed that I would focus my activities on the school's work to manage pupils' behaviour and leadership capacity to implement improvement strategies. You were appointed as deputy headteacher after the graded inspection in April 2022. Your appointment was a considered decision by trustees to add capacity to the school leadership team and drive improvements in pupils' behaviour. In January 2023, you became acting headteacher due to the substantive headteacher's absence. Equally, other members of the leadership team have taken enhanced positions with extra responsibility. These include an acting deputy headteacher and associate leaders. In addition, trustees have sourced the support of a variety of external partners. This includes support from a multi-academy trust and a nearby secondary academy to further develop the curriculum. A part-time leadership consultant has provided additional capacity to support you and your team during this time. Trustees are working towards joining a multi-academy trust. However, this has yet to be completed.

In our initial discussion, we discussed what steps had been taken to improve the school since the graded inspection. You clearly detailed the steps taken to further develop the curriculum. You value the support of external partners to bring about improvements. Though the curriculum is currently being embedded and is untested in formal examinations, your quality assurance signals that it is heading in the right direction. The curriculum development work has resulted in the school becoming more outward facing. You now engage with a variety of education hubs to improve teaching and behaviour, for example.

Since the graded inspection, you and your team have focused on developing systems and processes to manage pupils' behaviour. You have designed them to improve the behaviour culture in the school. This ensures that most pupils feel safe in school. At breaktime, I observed positive interactions between staff and pupils. In corridor areas and outside spaces, pupils generally interacted well with each other. I saw some rough behaviour between pupils and heard some swearing. These were swiftly dealt with by your staff team. Pupils responded to staff interventions without escalation.

The improvements to behaviour around school are not felt in the classroom. Most pupils that I spoke to think behaviour is not secure in lessons. They say pupils misbehave and do not focus. They think behaviour management varies between lessons. Pupils told me rewards and consequences do not make a difference to the behaviour in school. They hear derogatory language often. For example, female pupils hear negative comments about themselves. Pupils say there is an inconsistent approach to the support they receive from adults. Often adults listen, but pupils say that they do not do anything further.

You acknowledge that whole-school attendance can be improved. You have identified that that absence is too high in all year groups. This is particularly evident in Year 11. You closely monitor suspensions. Though suspension is used less than in the previous academic year, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive too many

suspensions. This is despite the reasonable adaptations you and your team make to support them. Your target figure for reduced suspensions has been exceeded. Suspensions are more than double the target for this year. The main reason for suspension is persistent disruptive behaviour. Not enough progress has been made to improve pupils' behaviour since the previous inspection, particularly in the classroom.

Trustees have endeavoured to add capacity to the leadership team. They have ensured you are supported by an external leadership consultant in your role as acting headteacher. This you value. You have engaged a range of external stakeholders to support the school with curriculum development, curriculum leadership, developing trustee practice and staff behaviour management. The wide variety of support illustrates the improvements needed in the school. You face additional challenges. There are subject-leadership positions needed for the new academic year. The agreement about multi-academy trust sponsorship is ongoing. All indicate further change. You and your team are managing a complicated range of additional demands. These impact your leadership capacity. Though you and your team are focused on the job in hand, these additional demands have slowed the pace of improvements that are necessary to move the school forward. Your post-inspection planning is adequate. However, it requires clearer timescales and quantifiable targets. Insufficient progress has been made.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for North Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

David Mills
His Majesty's Inspector