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Julie Hunter  
Headteacher  
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Dear Julie Hunter

### **Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Aureus School**

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 4 July 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 a judgement of requires improvement at its previous graded (section 5) inspection.

During the inspection, Catherine Old, His Majesty's Inspector, and I discussed with you and other senior leaders, the chief executive officer (CEO) and other officers of the GLF Schools multi-academy trust, and school standards board (SSB), 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 visited lessons, held meetings with many staff and spoke to a wide range of pupils. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

**Aureus School continues to require improvement. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to become good.**

#### **Main findings**

Since the last inspection, you have made a number of staffing changes. You have strengthened the senior leadership team. Trust staff have re-engaged to provide vital support to the school after an initial pause.

You and other leaders are making some essential improvements to the quality of education. Supported by a range of experts from within the trust, you have started the

vital work required to improve the quality of education. You have focused on refining continuing professional development (CPD) for subject leaders and teachers. You have raised the expectations for what pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) can achieve. You have made some improvements to teachers' understanding of what pupils learn and remember of the curriculum. Changes to the structure of pastoral staff has enabled them to place a critical focus on behaviour and attendance. This is beginning to make a difference. You have made some vital changes to how safeguarding is managed.

You have raised the expectations for teachers' expertise and subject knowledge. Staff and pupils agree that this is beginning to have an impact. This is encouraging. CPD for teachers initially focused on deepening subject knowledge. You have increased the frequency and effectiveness of monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching. Regular visits to lessons, by leaders and trust staff, provides much-needed feedback to teachers and helps to inform their specific CPD needs. You rightly identified that some staff need support to improve their teaching. You have made sure that these staff receive expert targeted help.

The support for pupils with SEND is more organised, despite the challenges faced since the previous inspection. Staff are aware of the specific needs of pupils with SEND and have greater access to generic strategies that may support them to learn the curriculum. The work that subject leaders have done with teachers to ensure that the curriculum is adapted to meet their needs is in its infancy. This needs to be embedded across all subjects.

You have begun making improvements to assessment in two distinct ways. Specialist trust staff have provided valuable support. As part of CPD, you have focussed on improving the consistency of assessment, by introducing common strategies and language. Subject leaders have introduced targeted methods to support teachers' checking of pupils' learning. Some of this work is rightly focused on Year 10 and Year 11. Here, teachers focus on identifying and remedying gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills as they approach their final examinations. Some staff are making effective use of checking for understanding during lessons and use this to inform the content of subsequent lessons. Leaders recognise that this essential part of practice needs to be embedded across all staff and with greater urgency.

Emotional needs are supported in the 'regulation room'. You have further strategies planned for September to increase this vital support. Trained staff support individual pupils who require it. However, more work needs to be done to ensure that this additional help caters for all needs effectively. The 'key worker programme', which includes fortnightly checking in with parents, is viewed positively because it is helping to improve communication.

Pupils are polite and friendly. In most cases, behaviour around the school is positive. Pupils' perceptions are that behaviour is variable in lessons. Leaders have proactively improved behaviour since the last inspection. Your approach is well thought through. Behaviour logs show fewer incidents over time. Most staff use consistent approaches to manage behaviour well. Collaborative work with other agencies, such as the police and local authority, is strong. Specific strategies to reduce violent behaviour and raise the self-esteem of boys has been successful. Suspensions are used appropriately. Attendance is improving gradually. Leaders are acting but must continue to focus on improving attendance and reducing persistent absence as a priority.

Safeguarding is effective. Expert leaders have clear systems in place to identify pupils at risk of potential harm. A well-developed and systematic approach to dealing with disclosures ensures that leaders take decisive and timely action to support vulnerable pupils. Extra capacity in the pastoral team enables trained staff to deal with low level concerns appropriately. A coordinated pastoral approach, using tracking and strong lines of communication, is ensuring that support is timely and appropriate. Pupils told inspectors that bullying is not prevalent at their school. They are confident that staff deal effectively with bullying when it is reported. Some pupils act as anti-bullying ambassadors. However, leaders have not yet addressed pupils' inappropriate use of banter robustly enough.

Leaders, including trust leaders and the SSB, recognise that whilst some progress has been made, it has not been robust and rapid enough yet. They know that there is still much to do to improve the school. Leaders have a realistic evaluation of the school's current strengths and challenges. The ongoing support from the trust is valued but needs to remain high priority and focused.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda Culling  
**His Majesty's Inspector**