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Steve Howell
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Howell

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of City of Birmingham School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 13 September 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.

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's overall effectiveness, but to identify and report on the school's progress. It is to highlight to the school and parents any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other senior leaders, staff, pupils, governors and representatives of the local authority 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 with groups of pupils and reviewed documentation. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to become good.

Main findings

You, and all leaders, are relentless in securing the best outcomes for the pupils at your school. You have rigorous plans to improve the areas of the school's work that need this improvement. Governors hold you robustly to account for this work. As a result of leaders' careful and detailed evaluation of all aspects of the school's work, the school is improving rapidly.

Pupils at your school have experienced a disrupted education. Many of them have been excluded from mainstream school. Prior to joining City of Birmingham School, pupils often have not had their needs, including special educational needs and/or disabilities, identified or met. Since the last inspection, you have intensified your work to make sure that pupils' needs are identified swiftly. You have developed extensive partnerships with external agencies so that pupils get the help they need. Staff are trained well, and they adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of their pupils effectively. As a result, pupils settle in quickly and soon achieve well.

At the time of the last inspection, you had just introduced a new curriculum. Since then, you have made sure that staff have the expertise and knowledge to implement the curriculum well. You have introduced a rigorous system of quality assurance that quickly identifies where improvements need to be made, and leaders make these changes swiftly. Subject leaders and heads of campus work as a team to plan the curriculum across the primary and secondary phases. They make sure that all pupils benefit from a curriculum that prepares them for their next steps. As a result, pupils learn well across the curriculum.

You have made sure that reading is a priority for all pupils. You have introduced an appropriate reading programme for secondary-age pupils who are not yet reading fluently. Pupils' reading ability is assessed precisely on entry to the school so that any gaps in reading can be addressed. All secondary staff are trained to support pupils at the early stages of reading. As a result of this new approach to reading, pupils are learning to read fluently more quickly. There is still work to do to make sure that all secondary pupils have any gaps in their phonic knowledge addressed and have more opportunity to read books that match the sounds they are learning. You are aware of this and are taking the appropriate actions.

Pupils who join your school often have disrupted patterns of attendance. You work tirelessly to identify and address the things that get in the way of pupils attending school regularly. As a result of the extensive range of support you offer, and the robust monitoring processes you have implemented, attendance improved last year. You know that work on attendance will always be important. At the start of this school year, nearly half of your cohort are pupils new to the school. You have already started to identify and address any attendance difficulties these pupils may have.

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

Yours sincerely

Claire Price
His Majesty's Inspector