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Dear Mr Robson

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Trinity Academy Richmond

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 11 October 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 February 2022.

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, Julie McGrane, Ofsted Inspector (OI), and I discussed with you, other leaders, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust, trustees, members of the local governing body and the diocese, 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. Inspectors also visited lessons, held meetings with other staff and spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. 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 be no longer judged as having serious weaknesses.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Since the previous monitoring visit, there have been some changes to the teaching and support staff team. The school's year group structure has changed from partially mixed-aged classes to single year groups across key stage 1 and key stage 2. The leadership of the school has remained stable, which has helped you to make improvements in priority areas. There is momentum in the school's improvement actions and a shared determination among all stakeholders to ensure that the school provides a high-quality education for pupils. The right actions are now being taken. There is demonstrable impact of this, especially for children in the early years. However, there is more to do to ensure that all pupils learn and remember the knowledge that they need to be ready for their next steps.

Much has been achieved in the early years. Staff have worked with another school, which has supported the development of a suitable curriculum for the early years. The school has now set out the knowledge that children should learn and plotted how children's knowledge should build over time in the early years. The learning environment has been transformed. It is now a purposeful and enticing place for children to learn. Activities are now designed to support children in learning the intended knowledge set out in the new curriculum. There is an increased focus on developing children's communication and language skills. Adults now introduce children to new vocabulary and encourage them to use these new words themselves. Leaders recognise the need to ensure that systems to check what children in the early years know and can remember are established.

The school has now identified the important knowledge that pupils should learn in each foundation subject. These curriculums are more ambitious than was the case at the last inspection. You have made judicious choices about curriculum priorities, choosing to use external schemes for some subjects to aid curriculum design. Although the curriculum intent has progressed well, implementation remains inconsistent. Sometimes, the activities that teachers choose are not helpful in supporting pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to learn and remember the knowledge set out in the curriculum. The school has still to ensure that teachers check that pupils have learned and remembered what they have been taught in foundation subjects.

Leaders have introduced coaching sessions to improve the teaching of reading. These have been successful in improving staff's understanding of how to teach early reading well. In lessons, new sounds are explained clearly, with lots of opportunities for pupils to practise reading these new sounds in words. However, leaders do not have a firm grasp of all the pupils who need additional support with reading. Some pupils, including those with SEND, have gaps in their reading knowledge. The school has paused additional reading catch-up sessions. Presently, those pupils who are behind in reading are not getting the help they need to become fluent and confident readers.

You introduced a new behaviour policy in the summer term. This has raised staff's expectations about how pupils should behave. Pupils' behaviour has begun to improve in classrooms. However, the management of some pupils' behaviour is variable. While some teachers encourage pupils to engage positively in lessons, some do not. There continues to be some variability in pupils' attitudes to learning. In some lessons, a minority of pupils do not concentrate fully. The school is working with, and as part of, a Department for Education behaviour hub to improve pupils' behaviour further. Effective work has taken place to make lunchtimes more positive. Pupils play well together at lunchtimes and enjoy using the new equipment that has been purchased.

The local governing body has strengthened considerably since the last monitoring inspection. Members of the local governing body now visit the school often, sometimes alongside other external specialists. They write comprehensive records of their visits and share these with the full local governing body. As a result, the local governing body has a thorough understanding of how leaders are working to improve the school. It provides supportive challenge to school leaders to ensure that actions to improve the school are achieved.

The board of trustees has worked to further strengthen the support that the trust offers the school. The appointment of a trust primary director has added capacity to leadership, which has contributed to the strengthening of the curriculum in the school. The primary director reports regularly to the board of trustees about the progress that leaders are making to improve the school. The trust board has provided financial support to the school, which has led to improvements, such as those in the early years.

The school is benefiting from a range of external support. For example, staff from the diocese have worked with leaders on some of the improvements to the curriculum. The school continues to receive support from an English hub, which is offering helpful advice.

You have maintained staff morale. Staff recognise the improvements that are being made and feel that these are having a positive impact. Staff feel that leaders are considerate of their workload and do what they can to ensure the staff team is motivated and respected. Similarly, parents recognise the inclusive nature of the school and recent improvements to the curriculum and pupils' behaviour.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the CEO of The Dales multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Leeds Anglican Diocese, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for North Yorkshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Tim Scargill-Knight
His Majesty's Inspector