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25 October 2023

Paul Brockwell  
Principal  
Ashlawn School  
Ashlawn Road  
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Rugby  
Warwickshire  
CV22 5ET

Dear Mr Brockwell

### **Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Ashlawn School**

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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in November 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, Andrew Madden, His Majesty's Inspector (HMI), and I discussed with you and other senior leaders, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust, other staff, trustees and the chair of the local governing board 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 carried out other activities, such as visits to lessons, meetings with other staff, speaking with pupils, speaking with parents and looking at other documents. 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**

There have been several changes since the school's last graded inspection. The previous principal left in December 2022. You took up your post in January 2023. Since this time, there have been changes to the structure of the leadership team to provide greater clarity around individual roles and responsibilities. An assistant principal joined in September 2023 to add further capacity to senior leadership. You have already appointed another assistant principal who will join in January 2024 along with a new special educational needs coordinator. Changes have also taken place to the local governing body.

Leaders have taken decisive action to help the school move forward. You have wasted no time in addressing the areas that needed to improve. Together as a school community, you have set about creating a new clear and coherent vision for the school. Leaders have consulted widely by seeking the views of pupils, staff, and parents and carers. Through parent forums, staff working groups and the student council, you have listened carefully to their ideas so that everyone feels valued and part of Ashlawn's future. The underpinning pillars of community, aspiration, respect and excellence (CARE), which are aligned to the trust's ambitions, continue to play a key role in what you are looking to achieve.

Leaders have acted quickly to improve behaviour and attitudes at the school. You have made sensible changes to the school day by splitting the lunchtime sittings. Additionally, leaders have looked carefully at the groupings of each class as well as reducing the number of classes that are split between different teachers. You consulted on a new behaviour policy across the school community before formally launching this in April 2023. Staff have received training on this new policy so that they are clear about how it should be implemented. Alongside this, you have ensured that pupils were made aware of these changes through assemblies. Leaders are closely tracking and monitoring the rewards and consequences that are being issued. This information is shared regularly with pastoral leaders so that they can identify patterns and trends as well as put in place interventions for those pupils who need it. Your work to tackle prejudicial views and inappropriate language has supplemented the wider curriculum. Several guest speakers have attended the school to speak about diversity and difference. This has been supported by your personal development programme coupled with assemblies on national events such as Black History Month. Early signs show that this is all having a positive impact.

Pupils are generally positive about the changes that have been made. They can already see the difference the new behaviour policy is making to the school, both in lessons and at social times. Pupils told inspectors that 'teachers use the behaviour system now' and that breaktimes and lunchtimes were 'much better'. That said, some pupils did say that, although they were aware of the various methods they can use to report incidents, they did still hear the occasional use of derogatory language at social times and did not always report it. Leaders recognise that there is more work to do to ensure that all pupils feel confident to report issues and that these will be dealt with sensitively.

Leaders have begun the process of improving the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A restructured inclusion faculty has been established which has a clear focus on helping pupils with SEND to access the curriculum and wider school life. Information relating to pupils with SEND is shared with staff alongside strategies for how to adapt learning opportunities effectively. That said, you already have plans to improve this further with the introduction of new learning plans to monitor the impact of any interventions that are put in place. Your visits to lessons, as well as evidence gathered during this inspection, show that there are positive signs that teachers are adjusting their approach so that pupils with SEND can engage effectively in lesson activities. However, you recognise this is not consistent and this practice needs to be embedded across the school. Additionally, you recognise that the proportion of pupils with SEND who are suspended from school or who are absent from school remains too high.

Leaders have worked closely with teaching staff to improve the delivery of the school curriculum. Staff have worked in small groups from across the school to share different approaches to assessment and how to check learning effectively. You have also given time for staff to meet in subject teams to put together their own specific approach to assessment. As a result, teachers are more consistent in how they use assessment and how they check that pupils are secure in what they know.

You have placed high importance on developing a reading culture across the school. Since the last inspection, a new literacy strategy has been introduced with a focus on three strands: supporting the weakest readers, opportunities to read in lessons, and developing a love of reading more widely. Leaders have ensured that all pupils have been assessed for their reading ability to identify different pathways of support. Some sixth-form students have acted as 'reading buddies' for those in Year 7 and Year 8 where small-group reading takes place during form time. For the weakest readers, leaders have put in place small-group interventions that include the use of commercial programmes to support the delivery of phonics. While the impact of this support for pupils in key stage 4 is clear, for younger pupils this is less so. Leaders recognise there is more work to do so that it is clear how they will measure the impact of any reading interventions in the future.

Governors and trust leaders provide strong strategic oversight of the school's work. They are using the trust's capacity effectively to help provide support and challenge to school leaders. Governors and trust leaders have an accurate view of the school's current position and recognise the school's many positive steps forward and areas that need to continue to improve.

The school has valued the collaboration work they have undertaken with a local multi-academy trust to improve behaviour and attitudes. There have been several visits that have taken place between the schools to share good practice. Staff have also visited another school in Leicestershire to develop their work further in teaching and learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Howes  
**His Majesty's Inspector**