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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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David Scales
Principal
Astrea Academy Woodfields
Weston Road
Doncaster
DN4 8ND

Dear Mr Scales

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Astrea Academy Woodfields

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 18 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 January 2023.

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, the chief executive officer (CEO), the regional director and chair of the trust management 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. I also met with the curriculum leaders for English and science, visited lessons and spoke to a selection of pupils. I reviewed the single central record, discussed the culture of safeguarding across the school and analysed your school's behaviour and attendance information. I have considered all of 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

You were appointed as principal at Astrea Academy Woodfields in March 2023. Since your appointment, the school has recruited a significant number of new staff, including several senior leaders and a special educational needs coordinator.

Your school has prioritised improving the quality of education. This includes implementing new approaches to delivering the curriculum. Although teachers employ these strategies consistently, some teachers use them more effectively than others. For example, teachers use assessment to check pupils' understanding in lessons. Some teachers do not use the information from assessment to inform their actions. This means that gaps in knowledge remain. This has a telling impact on how well some pupils know and remember important knowledge.

In most subjects, leaders have identified the knowledge that they want pupils to learn. Some subject curriculums are less well developed. In these subjects, it remains unclear how new knowledge connects to previously taught content. Your school is working closely with the trust leaders to strengthen the curriculum in these areas.

Teachers receive training that is linked to the school improvement priorities. You have introduced 'deliberate practice' sessions linked to behaviour and teaching strategies. These have been effective in creating consistency across staff. Teachers value the opportunity to work together and refine the curriculum through 'intellectual preparation time'.

Leaders are taking effective action to improve the school. Those responsible for governance monitor the impact of leaders' actions closely. They have a strong understanding of the progress the school has made and the areas that still need to improve further. Leaders have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness.

Your school has secured significant improvements in pupils' behaviour. Leaders have raised everyone's expectations of pupils' conduct. New behaviour systems have had a positive impact. Disruption to learning is minimised. Suspensions and visits to the 'reset base' have reduced dramatically compared to this time last year. The teachers and pupils with whom I spoke during this monitoring inspection appreciate the improvements made to pupils' behaviour. Despite these improvements, some pupils do not complete the work they have been set when they are removed from lessons. Leaders have also thought carefully about the support for pupils who continue to show challenging behaviour. You and your leaders have established the new 'bridge' provision to offer targeted support to improve these pupils' behaviour further.

Pupils' understanding of the personal, social, health and economic curriculum has improved. Pupils increasingly know the importance of being tolerant of people from different backgrounds. This is reflected in a reduction in incidents of discrimination and a more respectful school culture.

Pupils' attendance has improved slightly since the previous inspection. You, quite rightly, have identified pupils' attendance as a key improvement area for the school and have appointed a senior leader to oversee this work. Senior leaders know that there is more to do to improve attendance and ensure pupils do not miss valuable learning.

The school has clear improvement plans to address the next steps identified in the previous inspection. This plan is monitored and evaluated incisively by you, other leaders in school and by the trust. You are accessing support from the trust to continue to improve the quality of education and attendance. This includes working with the trust's newly appointed South Yorkshire lead for attendance. You, and trust leaders, have ensured that the school is improving quickly. Governors challenge the school about the impact of leaders' actions on specific groups of pupils, such as those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This ensures that all pupils benefit from the improvements made at Astrea Academy Woodfields.

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

Yours sincerely

Stuart Voyce
His Majesty's Inspector