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Dear Miss Gregg

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Sir William Stanier Community School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 19 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 took place because the school has received three 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 the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection with you and other senior leaders, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust, trustees and members of the local governing body. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I held meetings with other staff and pupils. I also scrutinised recent attendance, behaviour and safeguarding records. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Sir William Stanier Community School continues to require improvement. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that assessment strategies are used to identify the gaps in pupils' knowledge
- ensure that the support for those pupils at the earliest stages of learning to read is matched more closely to their needs.

Main findings

In September 2023, the trust that the school was previously part of merged with another trust to form a new trust named The Learning Partnership Academies Trust. Since the graded inspection in March 2022, one member of the local governing body has left and one has joined. A new head of school took up post in July 2022. This new head of school has been subsequently appointed as principal from January 2023. A senior vice principal and three assistant vice principals also took up posts in June 2022 and July 2022 respectively. Since the previous inspection, 23 teachers have left the school and 21 have joined.

The trust, members of the local governing body and the school are working in unison to tackle the weaknesses in the quality of education and pupils' behaviour that were identified at the previous inspection. Together, they thoroughly understand these weaknesses and they are clear about the actions that are required to tackle the shortcomings. Those responsible for governance are well informed about the progress that the school is making on the key priorities. Governors and trustees have a good understanding of their responsibilities and, as such, they challenge and support the school well. This is helping to make sure that the school is taking the right actions, in the right order, to bring about improvement.

The school promotes an open and reflective culture, where staff are encouraged to improve. Staff feel well supported in their roles. They value the collaborative atmosphere that permeates the school and helps them work together to strengthen their practice.

The school has supported staff to develop new, more ambitious curriculums that carefully set out the knowledge that pupils should learn. These updated curriculums are beginning to ensure that pupils' knowledge builds progressively as they move through the school. Teachers value the increased clarity about the subject content that they are expected to deliver. It is now abundantly clear to pupils what they are meant to learn.

Staff are benefiting from well-focused opportunities to strengthen their delivery of the curriculum. This is helping most staff to improve their teaching practice, so that they can better support pupils' learning in lessons. Many pupils appreciate the new approaches that staff are using. They believe that the work they are asked to complete is helping them to learn more. As a result, pupils are becoming increasingly adept at recalling prior learning. This means they are able to apply what they know to new learning with renewed confidence. However, these positive signs are not consistent across subjects and year groups. Some staff are at the earlier stage of putting their recent training into practice.

The school ensures that teachers are well informed about the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Recent and effective training means that staff are better prepared to adapt their delivery of the curriculum to support these pupils in lessons. However, this work has had varying levels of success. Some teachers have honed their practice quickly. Others are less effective in ensuring that pupils with SEND learn all that they should. This means that the achievement of pupils with SEND remains variable.

The school has begun to develop its use of assessment strategies and information. Staff have been suitably trained to check what pupils can do before, during and after units of work. In a few places, staff are skilfully identifying the knowledge that pupils know and remember. In these cases, staff are using this information to inform what pupils should learn next. However, this remains uneven. As a result, while most pupils are well informed about what they can do, pupils do not consistently benefit from feedback that identifies the gaps in their knowledge.

The school ensures that the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are carefully identified when they join the school. These pupils benefit from well-matched support that is suitably delivered by appropriately trained staff. As a result, pupils who have EAL quickly and successfully engage with the school's curriculum and wider opportunities.

The school is currently strengthening its systems to identify and support pupils who are at the earliest stages of learning to read. Previous approaches have ensured that these pupils have received some support. However, this has not been wholly effective. Not enough of these pupils make sufficient gains in their reading knowledge. Leaders have begun to revise their approach to early reading, but this work remains in its infancy. Consequently, some pupils who find reading difficult continue to struggle to access the full curriculum. This hinders the overall achievement of these pupils.

The school has successfully established well-defined expectations and routines to support pupils' behaviour. Staff fully understand their role in managing pupils' behaviour. They feel well supported in this aspect of their role. Pupils also understand the expectations that the school has of their behaviour. Pupils listen to staff and show respect for others. They follow well-established routines, which ensure that, in the main, the school site is calm and orderly. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is also typically appropriate. Teachers manage instances of more disruptive or challenging behaviour effectively. Staff make consistent and fair use of the new approaches to managing behaviour. Pupils appreciate the significant improvements to behaviour in lessons and around school that these changes have brought.

The trust has provided a wide range of support that has been carefully matched to the school's needs. This support has strengthened capacity and ensured that the actions to bring about improvement are effective and make a difference. Additionally, the school has used the trust's support to strengthen the identification of pupils' additional needs and to

build staff's ability to help pupils with SEND access the curriculum. Finally, the school has harnessed the support from the trust to improve curriculum design and delivery.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Pennington
His Majesty's Inspector