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20 November 2023

Emma Wilson-Downes  
Headteacher  
Felixstowe School  
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Felixstowe  
Suffolk  
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Dear Mrs Wilson-Downes

### **Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Felixstowe School**

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 20 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 a judgement of requires improvement at its previous graded (section 5) inspection.

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, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust, trustees, governors and staff, 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 visited lessons, held meetings with other staff and pupils. 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.**

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that all staff, particularly those have been recently appointed, receive the training and support they need to consistently promote high expectations and implement the curriculum as leaders intend; and

- continue to improve the attendance of pupils, in particular those Year 11 pupils who are too frequently absent, to ensure that pupils do not miss out on their learning.

## **Main findings**

Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes in leadership and staffing. The school appointed an executive headteacher and two deputy headteachers in September 2023. The school is fully staffed with many new teachers who also started in September 2023. The school currently employs over twenty early career teachers, School Direct Salaried and Teach First trainees.

The school has successfully improved aspects of the quality of education since the previous inspection. However, leaders are aware that more work needs to be done to implement and develop consistently effective teaching. Teachers regularly check on pupils' knowledge. Some teachers, especially those who are less experienced, do not always use these checks well enough to identify and adapt teaching to close the gaps in pupils' knowledge. Expectations are not always high enough for what pupils can achieve. When this happens, pupils do not draw on a depth of knowledge that ensures they produce work of sufficient quality. As a result, pupils do not always achieve well.

The school has implemented a whole-school approach to reading; reading is now a high priority for the school. Opportunities to read widely are built in throughout the curriculum. This encourages pupils to read often. Pupils who struggle to read are identified and supported through well-planned interventions. As a result, they catch up with their peers.

Teachers use information about pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to adapt teaching to meet pupils' wide range of needs. For example, the school has improved its support for pupils with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. This helps pupils to access the same curriculum as their peers. Consequently, achievement for pupils with SEND is improving.

Since the previous inspection, the school, with the support of the trust, has reviewed the structure of its senior leadership team. This has increased capacity which positively contributes towards improving the school. Leaders now have clear plans based on rigorous use of a range of information. This information is used to identify where more support and training are required. The school has used support from the trust to successfully develop both subject and other middle leaders, for instance to improve curriculum planning, provision for pupils with SEND, and behaviour.

The school has implemented a new strategy to improve behaviour. Pupils confirm that behaviour has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Teachers now have consistently high and well understood expectations of behaviour. As a result, the disruption in lessons has reduced. Pupils say that in most lessons they can focus on their work without interruption. Pupils who behave well and contribute to the school are acknowledged and rewarded for following the 'Felixstowe Way'. Pupils get on well with

each other and accept the ways in which they are different. Bullying is rare; when it happens, it is dealt with swiftly and robustly.

In the previous inspection, attendance for pupils with SEMH was an issue. These pupils' attendance is now improved because of the personalised support provided by the school. However, there remains some groups, in particular Year 11 pupils, who still attend less well than others. The school has made improving this a priority.

Students in the sixth form access a personal development curriculum that prepares them for adulthood. The school has improved the curriculum, enhancing it with enrichment days and form time sessions that cover relevant topics such as personal safety and finance. Therefore, the careers programme is increasingly comprehensive, and consequently, students now are receiving the knowledge they need to make well-informed choices.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the CEO of Unity Schools Partnership trust, the department for education's regional director and the director of children's services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Steve Woodley  
His Majesty's Inspector