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David Barber
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Dear Mr Barber

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of The Telford Priory School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 15 November 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 two 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 with you, other senior leaders, trust leaders, the CEO of the trust, other staff and the chair of the trust 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 visited lessons, talked to pupils and scrutinised a range of documents, including the school self-evaluation and improvement plans. I also checked the single central record. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

The Telford Priory School continues to require improvement. Leaders have made insufficient progress to improve the school.

Main findings

There have been significant changes to school leadership since the previous inspection in March 2022. An interim executive headteacher was appointed by the trust to provide

additional leadership capacity in March 2023. You were appointed as acting headteacher in June 2023, after the previous headteacher left. The trust has faced challenges in securing permanent appointments for some key leadership roles. This has affected the rate of progress made to bring about improvements.

You and the interim executive headteacher have a shared, ambitious vision for the school. You are clear about the improvements that need to be made and the steps to achieving them. You want the very best for pupils. Staff understand this vision and support the improvements being put in place. However, many of the actions taken to improve the school's effectiveness have been implemented only recently. Consequently, the intended impact of these actions has yet to be seen.

You have begun to address some of the shortcomings in the way the curriculum is implemented. Key changes were put in place for the start of this academic year. There has been a move away from the use of the 'curriculum entitlement booklets' to improve the design and implementation of the curriculum. There is now a 'learning phases' structure in place to help pupils know and remember more. You have changed the way teachers assess pupils' learning to ensure that teachers and leaders develop a more accurate picture of the progress pupils are making. However, there is noticeable variation between subject departments in how successfully they are changing their practice to improve curriculum implementation. Some subject departments have embraced the changes more effectively than others. You and your team are aware of the variability and are working to address this as you strive for these improvements to become embedded. A number of pupils talked positively about how their lessons and learning have recently improved because of the changes the school is making.

While some pupils have made some improvement in examination outcomes in English and mathematics, outcomes are still a long way from national averages. With the trust, you are continuing to strengthen your work on reading, as you know this is important for academic success.

The school has taken appropriate action to improve the delivery of the 'global citizenship' programme. Pupils now have time to acquire a greater depth of learning around the important topics covered, including healthy relationships and staying safe online. Learning is now further extended through the assembly programme. Because of this work, pupils have a stronger understanding of equalities and discrimination. They talk about how there is less discriminatory language used in school. The school is now rightly using this as a foundation for work on the 'school citizenship' behaviour curriculum. This initiative has only been underway for a very short period of time, so its impact cannot yet be seen.

Since the last inspection, the school has not done enough to improve pupils' behaviour. Limited leadership capacity and policy changes have delayed and hindered efforts to ensure that all staff adopt a consistent, effective approach to improving pupils' behaviour. It has taken too long for improvements in pupils' behaviour to become noticeable. Since starting as acting headteacher, you have established a higher standard of expectation around pupils' behaviour. However, a significant number of pupils have not yet

bought into this change in culture. This has resulted in very high levels of suspensions and exclusions. Leaders and trustees are rightly concerned by this and are scrutinising these numbers to ensure that consequences are proportionate. Generally, behaviour in lessons has improved. However, learning is frequently disrupted by the poor behaviour of pupils in corridors during lesson time. To address this, the school has employed more behaviour managers to offer additional support and intervention work for those pupils who are not managing their behaviour well enough.

The pastoral and safeguarding teams have worked more closely to ensure that pupils feel able to raise any concerns they may have, including those related to bullying. Pupils know to whom they can talk, and they value the way they can submit any worries they have via a button on the school website.

Pupils' attendance is slowly starting to improve. The school trialled different approaches last year, and there is now a strategic plan in place. This plan includes ensuring that all staff understand their role in improving attendance. Leaders now closely track attendance information. When appropriate, they challenge low attendance while providing appropriate support for families.

Through the 'education advisory board', trust leaders and trustees have scrutinised the school's improvement plans and held school leaders to account for their progress. The trust has also provided expert help in different areas of leadership, including safeguarding. You appreciate the external support that you have received. Leaders make the most of local hubs and networks as part of their ongoing improvement work, such as working with the local authority to improve attendance.

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

Yours sincerely

Nicola Beech
His Majesty's Inspector