

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



15 January 2024

Laura Mackie
Headteacher
Minehead Middle School
Ponsford Road
Minehead
Somerset
TA24 5RH

Dear Mrs Mackie

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Minehead Middle School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 13 December 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) of the trust and trustees 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 pupils, observed the school's work and visited lessons. I met with the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator (SENDCo) and subject leaders, and reviewed school documentation. 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

Since the inspection, several new staff have joined the school. The trust appointed you as substantive headteacher in September 2023. There is a new leadership team in place. A deputy headteacher and an assistant headteacher have also joined the school. This has

provided improved capacity for leadership, especially with a focus on behaviour, inclusion and pastoral care. The SENDCo took up post in January 2023. In addition, new subject leaders in English and mathematics have joined, and the pastoral team has grown in capacity. The focus of the monitoring visit was to evaluate the work of the school, consider the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and consider leaders' management of behaviour.

Leaders have focused on making sure that the needs of pupils with SEND are better met. Staff are now better informed about how to support pupils with SEND. This work has prioritised pupils with the highest needs. The trust has supported the school to establish the 'connect room'. This provides specialist support for pupils. The school identifies specific interventions to support pupils. This was not previously in place. This includes helping those pupils who are in the early stages of reading to improve their phonics knowledge. Adaptation for pupils with SEND is in place but it is not done well across the curriculum. The school knows that there is more to do to ensure that the needs of all pupils with SEND are met more cohesively.

Working with an external behaviour hub and involving all stakeholders, you have started to implement a plan for improving behaviour. The school has started by working with pupils who were at risk of exclusion or whose needs were not being met. You have made sure that there is appropriate provision and support in place for those pupils. This means that the needs of the pupils are better met. As a result, the school has seen a marked reduction in suspensions since last year.

The school is beginning to model its expectations for behaviour well. There has been a reduction in low-level, poor behaviour that prevents other pupils from learning. However, behaviour in and out of lessons is not consistently good, especially in key stage 3. A barrier to improving this is the high frequency of staff changes and covered lessons. Older pupils identify that where the curriculum is not well planned or implemented, behaviours are excitable.

Pupils state that there are unkind behaviours. They hear derogatory language from some pupils. The school has prioritised this. Pupils know and repeat the clear messages they hear in assemblies and in personal, social and health education lessons. Pupils have confidence that when they report their concerns to certain staff, they will follow these up.

You have put in place robust procedures to track and monitor attendance. Staff have specific roles. This means that there is more focus on pupils' attendance. The school works with families to better understand the reasons why pupils do not come to school. As a result, more pupils attend regularly. However, some pupils, such as those with SEND and disadvantaged pupils, continue to attend less regularly than their peers.

The CEO and trustees provide governance through the academy improvement board. They work with you to ensure that the priorities for the school are explicitly identified and that actions happen in a timely way. The board has not been able to fulfil all its planned monitoring visits. However, it uses feedback from trust leaders and an external school

improvement partner to be further informed. Staff are positive about the new leadership. They say that it has started to bring stability after a period of turbulence. However, staff recruitment remains a significant barrier to the work you are doing. There is a high level of staff absence, some of it long term. This means that teachers provide a lot of cover. They find this exhausting. This is something of which leaders are very aware.

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

Yours sincerely

Rachel Hesketh
His Majesty's Inspector