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Rebecca Vodden-Page
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Dear Mrs Vodden-Page

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Barrow Hill Primary Academy

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 31 January 2024, 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 several leaders the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. These leaders were: the executive primary lead and the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust; school leaders; the trust's director of SEND; the trust's early help manager and assistant; and representatives of the board of trustees and the academy improvement board. I was unable to meet with you during the visit. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also visited lessons and an assembly. I talked to a group of pupils and a range of teaching and non-teaching staff, and I observed lunchtime. 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.

Main findings

Since the last inspection in 2022, there have been several changes to staffing arrangements. This includes the appointment of a lead teacher with responsibility for curriculum. There have also been changes to the organisation of subject leadership roles.

You have continued to refine the curriculum in the school, rightly prioritising reading, writing and mathematics. In all subjects, you have developed leaders' expertise so that they have the knowledge they need to ensure that the curriculum has the desired impact. Leaders provide support to ensure that all staff have the subject and pedagogical knowledge to plan and deliver effective lessons. However, there are still some inconsistencies in the delivery of the curriculum. More work is needed to ensure that lessons enable pupils to learn and remember knowledge over time. You have made sure that targets for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are clear, and that teachers know precisely how to support these pupils in lessons.

You have been well supported by leaders from the multi-academy trust to refine and embed the school's systems, policies and procedures. This has led to a more consistent approach to managing behaviour and attendance, a strengthening of the provision for pupils with SEND, and improved communication with parents and carers. Trustees and members of the academy improvement board know the school well. They provide effective support and challenge to leaders. Staff in the school are positive about the changes you have made to the school. They value the support they have received to develop their skills and expertise.

You have worked with staff to improve pupils' behaviour in the school. Lessons are calm. Pupils say that staff manage behaviour fairly and consistently. Pupils get along with each other, and incidents of bullying, teasing and name-calling are rare. When they do happen, pupils trust staff to deal with them quickly. In early years, you have made sure that the curriculum is coherently planned. It is clearly sequenced to prepare children for their next stages in education. The curriculum plans identify precisely what children will learn and when. You have developed staff in early years so that they know how to deliver the curriculum effectively. In key stages 1 and 2, there is still more work to do to ensure that pupils gain a strong understanding of different faiths and cultures. You have begun to improve the curriculum in this area, but the impact is not yet evident.

You have sought support from a range of external partners. These include regional mathematics, English and behaviour hubs, as well as another local multi-academy trust. Leaders and staff have benefited from the support and challenge provided by these partners.

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

Yours sincerely

John Spragg
His Majesty's Inspector