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Chris Denley
Principal
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Dear Mr Denley

Special measures monitoring inspection of Penwith Alternative Provision Academy

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 1 February 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 was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require special measures following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in October 2022.

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 and leaders from the trust, including the chief executive officer (CEO), 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, scrutinised pupils' work, looked at curriculum planning and met with subject leaders and staff. 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 requiring special measures.

I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Since the previous monitoring visit, you have secured several staff to fill vacant posts. These include a part-time special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), an assistant principal post, and mathematics and religious education teachers. These additions to the team have significantly increased the ability of the school to continually improve.

You have built on the excellent start that was recognised at the time of the last monitoring inspection. Staff continue to establish excellent relationships with pupils who are increasingly settled as a result. Standards of behaviour have continued to improve. This is helping to ensure that staff and pupils are increasingly motivated to do better.

Now that staffing is beginning to settle, you have rightly become increasingly focused on the quality of the curriculum. Recently appointed staff have given you the capacity to broaden the curriculum both in terms of leadership of subject areas and teaching. This has allowed the school to think more deeply about what pupils should learn and when. You have made diligent use of the support from the trust on the curriculum. This means that your new, now complete, curriculum leadership team has benefitted from working with subject specialists to review planning. As a result, the intent of your curriculum is much stronger and clearer. There is now dedicated, sequenced planning for all subjects across the National Curriculum.

Your reading curriculum is increasingly established. You have invested in high quality books to promote a love of reading and support those in the early stages of reading. The new approach to teaching early reading is now increasingly embedded. You have ensured there is a range of books that are well matched to pupils' reading abilities. The initial work on this area in the primary part of the school means that practice remains more established here. However, there are signs that stronger practice can be seen in the secondary part of the school.

You correctly recognise there is still much to do. You have the right people in the right positions, but some are too new to have had the impact needed yet. A good example of this is the developments to the leadership of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). You have appointed a skilled and knowledgeable SENCo following a short period of turbulence in this area. She has undertaken significant work to improve the school's processes for meeting the individual needs of pupils with SEND. She has already significantly improved the quality of individual plans and how these are informed by improved assessment. Teachers also recognise the impact of the SENCo in helping them to consider how best to adapt their lessons to meet the needs of the pupils that they teach. However, these improved individual plans are new and have not yet had time to really demonstrate the impact needed on pupils' learning. This is much like the curriculum as a whole. Whereas planning is much better and there are more subject specialists teaching pupils, they have not had the time to really improve how well pupils learn over time.

You also recognise that, as the school improves, more can be expected. There are clear signs your strategies to improve pupils' behaviour and attendance are working. The number of incidents and suspensions are already on a downward trajectory. Pupils' attendance is improving, albeit from a very low starting point. You are right to review how you manage the most complex behaviour to reduce suspensions further. You are also right to want to tackle those who are persistently absent so that they can better access the curriculum by being in school.

Those in governance positions continue to provide targeted and strategic challenge and support to the work that you do. For example, governors have ensured there is a continued focus on learning and how you and other leaders realise the ambition of the curriculum as set by trustees. Many governors work in schools themselves and understand the nature of the challenge of your setting and the communities you provide for. They utilise this effectively to ensure that the school is focused on the right things for pupils.

Much like your staff feel supported very well by the school, you feel well supported by the trust and governors. You recognise the support on developing the intent of the curriculum has made a real difference. The trust continues to support you by checking on and adapting your plans for improvement so that they remain relevant and useful.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the CEO of WAVE multi-academy trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Cornwall County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Barnes
His Majesty's Inspector