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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Liz Green
Headteacher
Huntcliff School
Redbourne Mere
Gainsborough
Lincolnshire
DN21 4NN

Dear Mrs Green

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Huntcliff School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 27 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 have serious weaknesses following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in April 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 and other senior leaders 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 spoke with groups of pupils, scrutinised behaviour and attendance records, considered the school's work to safeguard pupils and observed the behaviour of pupils during lessons and at social times. 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 school should take further action to:

- Ensure that, through oversight of the restructured board of trustees, the school's actions remain tightly focused on the improvements that are necessary to provide pupils with a high-quality education.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the school has experienced significant instability and change. You, the current acting headteacher, began your post in January 2024 on a temporary basis. The trust board has engaged the support of a multi-academy trust to support school improvement. The school aims to join this trust shortly. Leaders from the trust are working with school leaders to facilitate this change and to improve the school. This includes two vice principals from the trust working with the school full time and additional leadership support from a trust executive principal. You and other school leaders hold temporarily enhanced roles while this transition takes place. The school has appointed a permanent headteacher who will begin their role in April 2024. During this inspection, I focused primarily on the actions you have taken to improve the standards of pupils' behaviour in school.

Your actions since the previous monitoring inspection have largely focused on creating a more focused learning environment for pupils. You have used external professionals, for example from the trust that the school intends to join, to support the school's improvements. The school has a new and simplified behaviour policy. This makes it easier for staff and pupils to know what the expectations are. In many areas this is working well. Lessons are calmer and many pupils are experiencing fewer disruptions to their learning than they used to. You are aware that there remains inconsistency in how effectively some staff use this policy and are providing additional support for these staff. A minority of pupils are still regularly removed from lessons for poor behaviour.

To support improving standards of behaviour, you have provided staff with focused training in how to create an effective learning environment. This programme is set to continue as these changes embed. Although the number of suspensions for poor behaviour has increased, this was anticipated as the expectations of pupils were raised. The school now provides effective reintegration and support to pupils who experience suspension. Leaders have a clearer understanding of what behaviours are leading to suspensions. You reasonably expect to see a reduction in suspensions as the policy, training for staff and support for pupils become more established.

You have taken a similar approach to improving the curriculum. You have used current research to inform training for staff on how to teach effective sequences of lessons. You have begun to develop a programme of coaching alongside this to support teachers. Middle leaders have had opportunities to work with colleagues in other settings to revise subject curriculums. Departments now benefit from access to subject association materials to inform this work.

Those with responsibility for governance have taken a number of decisive actions in recent months, such as engaging with a multi-academy trust and restructuring the existing board of trustees. The board of trustees has encouraged the school to access support from other professionals, such as the local authority school improvement team. These actions have helped to provide stability and leadership capacity. However, over time, those with responsibility for governance have not had a sufficiently detailed overview of the school's performance. They have not provided sufficient challenge to school leaders on the impact of their actions to improve the school. Current scrutiny and challenge for school leaders is being provided by external partners, such as leaders in the multi-academy trust that the school plans to join, rather than those responsible for governance.

In recent months, there has been greater progress and impetus. However, you know that, following the recent period of instability, there is further work to embed your current initiatives and secure sustained improvements for pupils at the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Thomas Wraith
His Majesty's Inspector