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30 April 2024

Natalie Chamberlain and Thomas Redman  
Head of Schools, Secondary and Primary  
Hailsham Community College  
Battle Road  
Hailsham  
East Sussex  
BN27 1DT

Dear Ms Chamberlain and Mr Redman,

### **Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Hailsham Community College**

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 14 March and 17 April 2024, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. Inspectors first visited the school on 14 March 2024. Inspectors carried out a second visit on 17 April 2024 to gather additional evidence and complete the inspection. The information in this letter reflects evidence gathered during both visits.

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 March 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, Zoe Enser, Scott Reece, Julie Sackett, His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), and I discussed with you, other senior leaders, trustees and a representative from the local authority 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. We also visited lessons, spoke to groups of pupils, visited breaktimes and lunchtimes and scrutinised school documents. 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 last inspection, there have been further changes to the leadership of the school. The senior leadership team is now much more stable, with a clear sense of where improvements are urgently needed. You, along with your trustees, are focused on making sustained changes so everyone has the highest expectations for what pupils will learn and their conduct. It is evident that this drive for improvement is at the centre of each decision leaders are making. However, you acknowledge there is more to do to make sure the new improvements are consistently implemented by all staff, particularly in the secondary phase. This is to ensure pupils know what is expected of them alongside them getting the most appropriate support to learn well.

Pupils across the school are being offered a broad curriculum. In the primary phase, pupils are given the precise teaching they need to learn to read accurately and fluently and are positive about their learning. In the secondary phase, you have recruited more specialist teaching staff to ensure that the curriculum is being taught by specialists. This recruitment is ongoing as you look to strengthen the teaching expertise in every subject. This includes enabling all pupils to learn well across the key stage 3 curriculum in readiness for the subjects they will study at key stages 4 and 5.

Since the last inspection, improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes in key stages 3 and 4 has rightly been one of the main areas of focus. Pupils recognise and value how the changes to the pastoral system have given them a better understanding of who to speak to if they need support. During the last inspection, pupils raised concerns about the conduct of other pupils and that, at times, this made them feel unsafe. Most pupils spoken to during this monitoring inspection reported some improvement in the behaviour of their peers and could recognise the positive actions being taken by leaders to achieve this. However, the school's own data on behaviour, and the views of pupils, indicates there is still a significant minority of pupils who do not meet the school's expectations. You recognise this and are providing ongoing support to both staff and pupils. This includes some pupils receiving bespoke provision to help them manage their behaviour. You are beginning to see some initial impact of this work, including more pupils starting to engage with learning through the in-school alternative provision. You have further plans to strengthen this to give identified pupils in key stage 3 earlier intervention to ensure they are ready to learn as they move into key stage 4.

Pupils have a clear sense that bullying is wrong. They know who they should report any potential incidents to. However, a small number of secondary pupils spoken to during the inspection are not confident that the school would take appropriate action were they to report any bullying. In addition, while reported incidents of the use of prejudicial language have reduced, secondary pupils feel that this language is still used around the school site. As yet, staff are not consistently challenging the use of this language. In addition, a minority of pupils are not always clear why the use of derogatory language is not acceptable and about the potential impact of the words they use. Recent staff training and ongoing improvements to the personal development curriculum reflect how important

you and your leadership team see this issue. You recognise the need to give staff the expertise and skills they need to ensure everyone uses a consistent approach in following the school's behaviour policy and expectations.

Secondary pupils recognise some improvements in the behaviour of pupils in lessons. There is evidence of the impact of your work in reducing the number of pupils truanting from lessons. While there is now a reduction in the disruption to lessons, pupils perceive a variability in the extent to which staff are following the outlined behaviour processes. This means that pupils are experiencing variation in how they are guided throughout the school day. Pupils told inspectors that this is having an impact on how keen they are to learn in different subjects. For example, pupils spoken to were positive about the support they had in some subjects, such as English and physical education, but less positive about others. As a result, pupils feel behaviour will be worse in some areas of the school. This further supports your ongoing work with staff to ensure they have the skills needed to implement a consistent approach in managing behaviour.

You and your team continue to look at how the use of suspension in the secondary phase can be reduced to ensure more pupils are in school and learning well. While there is some evidence of a reduction in the use of suspension, there continues to be a significant minority of pupils who are not meeting the higher expectations the school now has of their conduct. Time is being taken to consider the support for any pupil who is being regularly suspended from school or who is spending time in the school's internal suspension space, 'Reflect'. You recognise the need to continue to work with pupils, and their parents and carers, to give pupils the right help at the right time. This is to ensure there is a collective focus on helping pupils to be in school and to achieve well.

While there have been some reductions in the level of absence, you and your team acknowledge that too many pupils in the secondary phase miss a significant amount of their education. Your staff are tracking attendance more closely now and have identified key groups where more targeted support is needed. This is starting to have an impact. You recognise the need to continue to embed this work alongside the developments in the quality of education to help more secondary pupils understand the importance of regularly coming to school each day.

You and your senior leadership team are currently being supported by the executive headteacher of MARK Education Trust and by a school improvement adviser from the local authority. You are positive about this support in helping to implement the school development plan. Trustees are also providing support for you and the school community as you all focus on the much-needed improvements. You also explained to inspectors the current actions being considered as the school looks to join the trust. Through this process, you expressed the importance of continuing to work with parents and the wider Hailsham community in building their understanding of, and confidence in, the changes that are being put in place.

I am copying this letter to the co-chairs of trustees, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for East Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Aimee Floyd  
**His Majesty's Inspector**