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Piccadilly Gate
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Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
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Sandra Pennington
Headteacher
Birchen Coppice Academy
Woodbury Road
Kidderminster
Worcestershire
DY11 7JJ

Dear Mrs Pennington

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Birchen Coppice Academy

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 9 May 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 May 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, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust, governors 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 other curriculum leaders, looked at curriculum planning, visited lessons, spoke to pupils 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 having serious weaknesses.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Prior to the last monitoring visit, there had been a great deal of turbulence in the leadership of the school. Since my last visit, you have maintained a stable and dedicated leadership team. All leaders share your vision and are working effectively to improve the school.

Since the last monitoring visit, the school has continued to work with determination to improve the quality of education. Reading continues to develop. Pupils learning to read benefit from a well-structured phonics programme. Regular coaching and monitoring has ensured that staff continue to refine and develop their skills. Pupils who need additional support receive regular and high-quality catch-up sessions. Older pupils are becoming confident and fluent readers. They read a wide range of high-quality texts. Pupils now have positive attitudes to reading. They talk with enthusiasm about the books they are reading and love reading aloud to adults in school.

Pupils' behaviour has continued to improve. Leaders have ensured that all staff share the same high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils know and understand the school rules. Staff have worked with the pupils to ensure they understand what good behaviour looks like and the consequences of not demonstrating good behaviour. Breaktimes have been restructured to give pupils more things to do, such as play chess, games and football. Pupils recognise that behaviour has improved and that adults deal with incidents effectively if they arise. Learning behaviours have also improved. Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning. In lessons, they engage well with learning and are respectful. Pupils have been given many opportunities to be role models, which is helping them model positive behaviour. For example, all pupils in Year 6 have a role in school and there is a reading ambassador in every class. Behaviour in the early years is strong. As soon as the children start in Nursery, they are taught how to listen, work together with their friends and to concentrate on learning. Children play well with each other and sustain concentration for extended periods of time.

The school has focused on improving the way the curriculum is taught. All staff have benefited from professional development and coaching. They have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. This in turn is improving the pupils' behaviour in the classroom. However, there is still continued work to do to ensure that the curriculum is consistently of a high quality. In many foundation subjects, it is not clear what pupils need to know and remember. Therefore, pupils are not yet building their learning successfully over time.

At the previous monitoring visit, there were too many pupils who regularly missed school. While this is still the case, the number of pupils who are regularly absent has declined significantly. All staff have worked really closely with parents to help them understand the importance of regular attendance. This work is paying off, but there is still more work to do to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly.

Safeguarding continues to be high priority. Leaders have established a well-trained team who are vigilant in all aspects of safeguarding. Staff act quickly to ensure that pupils and their families get the support they need.

Governors and trust leaders have continued to effectively support the school. They ensure they provide both challenge and support to you and your staff. They maintain close oversight of improvements and areas that still need further work. This ensures that they have an accurate view of the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer or equivalent of the Victoria Academies Trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Worcestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Eve Morris
His Majesty's Inspector