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4 July 2024

Joe Phillips  
Headteacher  
Wednesfield Academy  
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Dear Joe Phillips

### **Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Wednesfield Academy**

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 19 June 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 you and other senior leaders, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust, the chair of the board of trustees, another trustee and members of the Academy Interim Board the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed any ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also visited lessons in a range of subjects, met with curriculum leaders and with groups of pupils and reviewed a range of documentation. 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.**

The school should take further action to:

- clarify the school's approach to ensuring that pupils who miss lessons catch up quickly so that learning is not interrupted.

## **Main findings**

Since the last inspection, the school has become part of the Matrix Academy Trust and you have been appointed as headteacher. You and the new leadership team now in place have greatly increased the capacity to continue and sustain the improvement process to become a good school. The trust's ethos places pupils firmly at the centre of improvement planning. They have ensured that you have the right team, with the right skills to drive the school forward, with the support, challenge and resources they need. A successful recruitment drive has ensured that subject specialisms are now well covered.

You and your new leadership team very quickly identified systemic weaknesses in curriculum design and implementation. Significant investment has been made into designing an ambitious, well-sequenced curriculum in every subject. Clarity about the purpose of long-, medium- and short-term planning has paid dividends. All subjects have identified clear end points at appropriate points. These are underpinned by medium-term plans that set out the component skills, knowledge and understanding that need to be taught, ensuring that every pupil has access to the same ambition. The expectation that individual teachers will plan to adapt learning to meet the needs of the children they teach has led to a sea change in the support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils say that this has been a significant and very welcome change for them. They feel that they are now making progress and are a part of learning, rather than spectators in the learning of others.

Middle leaders have been well supported to build the skills and understanding they need to provide effective oversight of their subject curriculum and its implementation. Curriculum planning and review is now well understood and subject leaders know what they need to do next to ensure that curriculum delivery is of a consistently high quality. Focused monitoring and evaluation provides them with the information they need to do this.

You and your leaders have ensured that there is a clear focus on reading. Appropriate programmes are in place to support those who are at the early stages of learning to read. Pupils say that this has helped them to improve their reading significantly, and that they feel more confident in other areas of learning as a result. In addition, as part of the whole-school strategy to promote reading, oracy and literacy, leaders have trialled a literacy focus in Year 7 which is designed to build pupils' vocabulary and reading skills. It has been very successful and will be 'rolled out' for all key stage 3 pupils next academic year.

You know that there is more work to do and that assessment is a focus for them. Your leaders want pupils to know what their areas for development are in each subject and what they need to do to improve so that they become more independent learners. They

are clear that this is a crucial next step in making sure that outcomes for all pupils improve over time.

At the last inspection, some poor behaviour was identified. When the trust took over the school, they recognised that this was more widespread than thought. You have taken a root and a branch approach to improving behaviour, which has had significant impact. Pupils say that it is like a different school. For instance, following the introduction of a one-way system they describe corridors and staircases as calm and safe now. Most pupils have recognised the calming impact of the family lunchtime system. Pupils understand what is expected of them and know that their teachers will challenge them if they do not meet those expectations. They say that it is now rare for their learning to be disrupted and that teachers can teach instead of tackling poor behaviour. Pupils enjoy their learning much more as a result. Importantly, pupils are uniformly positive about their experiences at school now. They are proud to come here and of their achievements. They feel that they have been part of the improvement process and that they have earned the trust of their teachers and leaders. They would like that trust to be reflected through the development of additional routes in order to share their opinions about how improvements can be continued.

You and your leaders have taken effective action to reduce absence, including persistent absence. They have worked persistently with pupils and parents to ensure that they understand the importance of regular attendance. Overall, attendance is now broadly in line with the national average, including for pupils with SEND. You are now working to secure further improvement in the attendance of other groups of pupils. Furthermore, you recognise there is further work to do to clarify the school's approach to ensuring that pupils who miss lessons catch up quickly so that learning is not interrupted.

The school has worked hard to improve relationships with parents through increased communication and is continuing this work. Most recently a parent forum has been established to ensure that their voices are heard and they can contribute to improvement.

You and your leaders know that the journey towards receiving a judgement of good is ongoing. Rightly, they have great confidence in their capacity to get there.

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

Yours sincerely

Mel Ford  
**His Majesty's Inspector**