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Mr Christopher White
Head of School
Hylands School
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Dear Mr White

Monitoring inspection of a school not in a category of concern of Hylands School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 15 October 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 meets the monitoring threshold as set out in the [Monitoring Inspection Handbook](#).

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's key and (where applicable) provision judgements, 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, trustees, governors and leaders from The Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT) 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 carried out visits to lessons, met with groups of staff and pupils and observed behaviour around the school. I also reviewed the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but some aspects of the school need further improvement.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes in leadership and staffing. A new head of school started in June 2024. He has been supported by an associate director of TKAT since that date. The school has recently appointed several new subject leaders. You have put in place an effective programme of support for teachers who have recently joined the school.

The school has successfully improved aspects of the quality of education since the previous inspection. However, leaders are aware that more work needs to be done to develop and implement consistently effective teaching. The school has improved the quality of the curriculum. This identifies the important knowledge that pupils need and the order in which they need to learn it. Opportunities to recall prior learning are built into the curriculum. This enables pupils to gain and retain important knowledge. The school is working to ensure that the curriculum is ambitious and engaging for all pupils in all key stages. Reading continues to have a high profile in school. When weaker readers need support to improve, they receive it.

The school has improved the quality of teaching in lessons. Lessons now follow a consistent structure. Pupils regularly complete 'do now' tasks at the start of lessons. These help them recall and retain important knowledge. Teachers present ideas clearly before pupils practise what they have learned. Staff know the needs of pupils well. They provide support and adapt the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This helps them access the curriculum successfully. The school has provided much training for staff. As a result, teachers often use their strong subject knowledge to plan and teach effective lessons. They regularly check how well pupils have learned. They use these checks to adjust the curriculum to close any gaps in pupils' knowledge. They set ambitious tasks for pupils. Consequently, the quality and quantity of work that pupils complete is increasingly of a good standard.

When teaching is less strong, work is not always matched well enough to pupils' needs. Some staff still do not check well enough how well all pupils have learned. Some do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. This means that they do not always gain the breadth and depth of knowledge that they need to achieve highly. When expectations are low, this also impacts on behaviour. When work is not well matched to their needs or starting points, pupils do not find it engaging enough. The school is aware of this and is providing training to develop consistently high-quality practice in lessons.

Behaviour in school is improving. The behaviour policy has been revised. It is clear about what is and what is not acceptable. Staff have received helpful training and support. They have become increasingly consistent in how they follow the policy. They have raised their expectations of pupils' behaviour. This is reducing interruptions to learning in lessons. Consequently, pupils can usually focus on their work. New systems such as morning and afternoon line ups help lessons get off to a prompt and purposeful start. The 'swap shop' allows pupils to get the equipment they need to learn. When staff use the policy consistently, behaviour is positive. This is the case in most lessons. However, not all staff

follow the behaviour policy consistently. When this happens, a minority of pupils interrupt the learning of others. The number of suspensions and exclusions is still too high, but it is falling. The number of pupils who are suspended or permanently excluded is decreasing. If pupils need support to improve their behaviour, they receive it. Pupils say that the school is a place where they can be different. Although there is some bullying, this is dealt with effectively. Most pupils want to learn. They are polite and courteous. Pupils are ready to seek support and are able to report concerns.

Pupils' attendance remains lower than the national average overall, but it is improving. Fewer pupils than before miss large amounts of school. Staff analyse data closely to identify those who need support. They work closely with local services, pupils, parents and carers to improve pupils' attendance. A few pupils still do not have a positive attitude to school, and they do not yet attend school regularly enough. The school should continue its work to raise pupils' aspirations and engagement with school so that all pupils attend well.

The school has a clear, accurate understanding of its strengths and where it needs to improve. Leaders have realistic and robust plans to make further progress. These plans are checked regularly. The trust swiftly provides additional support and training when it is needed. The school is clear about the need to avoid 'quick fixes'. It is committed to ensuring that high expectations and effective systems are followed and understood by all so that pupils enjoy school and achieve highly. Staff are very positive about the training they receive and support for their well-being and workload.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Woodley
His Majesty's Inspector