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Steven Henneberry
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Henneberry

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

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 12 November 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 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, other staff, trustees, members of the local advisory committee (LAC) and 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. I also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, met with pupils and staff 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 some aspects of the school need further improvement.

The school should take further action to:

- develop teachers' expertise further so that they make better use of information from assessments to adapt their teaching and remedy the gaps in pupils' knowledge

- enhance the support that is in place for older pupils who have gaps in their reading knowledge
- ensure that staff are well equipped and confident to implement the new behaviour policy consistently well
- strengthen the communication about recent changes with pupils to help them to form more positive and trusting relationships with staff.

Main findings

In recent years, the senior leadership team has been refreshed. For instance, the school has recruited new members to the senior leadership team. The school has also employed a student support officer and attendance officer, and redesigned its processes to support pupils with emotional and behavioural needs. The LAC and trustees' roles have been redefined.

The delivery of the curriculum has been strengthened. Teachers are beginning to have a stronger understanding of how to design effective learning activities. This is increasingly ensuring that pupils, including students in the sixth form, gain the knowledge that they need to achieve well. In addition, the school has raised the profile of the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. For example, more time is given to teachers to design and deliver the PSHE lessons. There is also greater use of specialist teachers to teach PSHE. This renewed approach to delivering PSHE is helping pupils to engage more with the subject content than in the past. As a result, they are starting to develop a stronger understanding of life in modern Britain.

The school has begun to enhance its systems for checking on how well the curriculum is delivered. This is helping the school to identify and tackle weaknesses. Most staff appreciate the additional support that they receive from school. Nonetheless, some of the school's work to get the right training for staff is in its infancy. As a result, some staff are not equipped with the skills and knowledge that they need to enhance their teaching practice. For example, some teachers are not sufficiently equipped to check if pupils have learned the intended curriculum. This hampers how well teachers adapt their learning activities so that pupils are ready to learn new subject content. Consequently, some pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, do not progress through the curriculum as well as they should.

The school is increasingly prioritising reading. For instance, additional time is allocated for younger pupils to read with their teachers. The school has also introduced a 'step' reading buddy programme. This gives sixth-form students opportunities to support younger pupils to build their confidence in reading. However, some of these positive changes are only aimed at supporting younger pupils. The support for older pupils who struggle to read is not as well established. This means that older pupils do not get the support that they need to help them to read with fluency and confidence.

In addition to the improvements made to the quality of education, the school has begun to address other weaknesses. The school has raised its expectations of pupils' conduct. For instance, staff have embedded stronger routines and structures to lessons. Pupils are increasingly respectful of these new routines. Consequently, this has cultivated a positive climate for learning and improved pupils' behaviour in lessons. However, some staff have not developed sufficient confidence to implement the new behaviour management policy consistently well. As such, some pupils continue to exhibit challenging behaviour. At times, this interrupts the learning experiences of other pupils.

In the past, stakeholders' negative perceptions of the school have hindered school improvement. With the help of trustees, the school has started to take steps to ensure that the school's vision is understood by pupils, staff, parents and carers. For instance, parents are kept informed of pupils' behaviour and progress through an online tool. This has fostered a more positive relationship with some parents and has helped to improve pupils' learning experiences.

Pupils increasingly value the support that they get from staff. Nevertheless, the school has not fully remedied the fractured relationship between staff and pupils. In part, this is because the school has not ensured that some staff apply the behaviour management policy consistently well. As a result, the respect and trust that pupils have of some staff has not been restored.

The recent changes to governance have helped improve how members of the trust and the LAC offer sustainable challenge and support to the school. Consequently, this has helped the school to instil positive changes. Nevertheless, some recent instability in senior leadership has slowed the progress of the school's improvement work. To address this, the school is beginning to make effective use of external support. For example, the school has benefited from guidance from the local authority and other well-established schools. This is broadening the strategies that the school is using to drive positive changes, for example in pupils' behaviour and learning. Even so, the school is pursuing further external support to sharpen the oversight that it has over the quality of education.

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

Yours sincerely

Amina Modan
His Majesty's Inspector