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9 May 2025

Rachel Hudson  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Hudson

**Monitoring inspection of a school not in a category of concern of Blacon High School, A Specialist Sports College**

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 2 April 2025, 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 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, governors and a representative of 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, met with staff and pupils, sampled pupils' work and 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.**

## **Main findings**

Since the previous inspection, there have been some changes in subject leadership, staffing and governance. The school has made strides in building on the positive developments seen in the last inspection. The school's motto, 'aspire, believe, achieve', lies at the heart of the school's work. Currently, the school's published outcomes do not reflect the improvements that have been made.

The school has prioritised improving the quality of education. It has raised expectations of what all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), can achieve. There has been a strong emphasis on improving the delivery of the curriculum in all subjects. The school has successfully established teaching and learning groups in different curriculum areas, along with clear pedagogy processes that are in the process of being embedded. Staff value the training opportunities that the school has provided to develop their skills, such as on questioning. These have included visits to other schools and sharing best practice with other colleagues within the school. Staff are now using their secure subject knowledge to design appropriate teaching activities. They revisit prior learning and explain concepts clearly. Staff are also beginning to use checks on learning more effectively to identify and address pupils' misconceptions before introducing new learning. This is helping pupils to deepen their understanding. However, some pupils continue to have gaps in their knowledge. The school is aware of this and is working to address this through the curriculum.

Following an external review, the school has implemented strategies to meet the needs of pupils with SEND more effectively. The school has ensured that staff now have access to high-quality information about the needs of these pupils, including updated pupil profiles. The school has provided training for staff to help them improve how to adapt the delivery of the curriculum. Many pupils with SEND are now receiving more effective support in the class and learning more. Overall, while improvements have been made, some inconsistencies remain in the delivery of the curriculum. This hinders the achievement of pupils, including those with SEND.

The school has maintained a strong focus on improving reading. Key staff have received training in phonics. The support for pupils who find reading difficult, particularly those in key stage 4, is improving. Older pupils spoke positively about the increased opportunities that they now have to read for pleasure during the school day. This is helping them to build their confidence and fluency in reading. In addition, all subject curriculums emphasise the development of subject-specific vocabulary and comprehension skills. The effectiveness of the reading programme is being closely monitored so leaders can evaluate the impact of this work.

The school has reviewed and refined its strategies to improve pupils' attendance. Pupils now understand the importance of high attendance and the link with their achievement. An additional member of staff has been employed to increase the capacity of the attendance team. This is helping the school to work more closely with parents and carers to follow up pupils' absences. High attendance is celebrated through rewards. The school

is doing all it can to remove the barriers that prevent pupils from attending school regularly. As a result, the overall rate of pupils' attendance is improving, particularly in key stage 4. In addition, the number of pupils who are persistently absent is declining.

The school has clear improvement plans to address the next steps identified in the previous inspection. Leaders have improved the methods for evaluating the impact of the school's work on the quality of education that pupils receive. This is enabling the school to prioritise the most effective strategies for driving forward improvements. Subject leaders who are new to role are receiving ongoing training and support to develop their curriculum thinking and the support that they can offer to staff. Staff spoke positively about the improvements at the school. They feel that the school is considerate of their workload and well-being. Governors continue to use their broad range of expertise to support and challenge the school. This is helping the school to improve.

The school has accessed a range of support from external providers. The local authority has provided regular challenge and support. It has also brokered helpful support to develop the quality of education. A local university and two multi-academy trusts are providing ongoing support for a variety of areas. For example, one trust has provided support to improve teaching in English, mathematics and science. Another trust is providing support for curriculum development and behaviour.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of governors, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Cheshire West and Chester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar  
**His Majesty's Inspector**