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Dear Mr Sharples

Special measures monitoring inspection of Sandwich Technology School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 1 and 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 was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require special measures following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in May 2024.

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, Alan Johnson, Ofsted Inspector (OI), and I discussed with you and other senior leaders, trustees (referred to by the school as governors), and representatives from a supporting trust, 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. We visited a large number of lessons across the school, spoke to pupils, parents and other staff. We also undertook scrutiny of your strategic action plans and evaluations of your work, both by yourselves and by external audits. 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 no longer be judged as requiring special measures.

HMCI strongly recommends that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Since the last inspection, there have been a number of changes, including your appointment as acting headteacher. New members have also joined the leadership team, as well as a redistribution of roles among existing members of the team. Additional capacity has been added with the appointment of two assistant headteachers, who will begin their roles next term. Additionally, changes have been made to the trust board (known in the school as the governing body), including a new chair of governors and new members of the governing body. For this monitoring inspection, the primary focus was around behaviour, the safety and welfare of pupils, pupils' attendance, and how these contribute to the culture within the school. There was additionally some examination of the quality of education pupils now receive.

The school has introduced systems to address the high levels of internal truancy identified in the last inspection. The 'yellow book' system has been in place since January 2025, with the goal of pupils reaching the 'doors in four' minutes from their last lesson. Clear sanctions are in place for pupils who do not follow the revised rules. Higher expectations of pupils are having a positive impact on pupils' behaviour. They are viewed positively by pupils, staff and parents. As a result, levels of internal truancy have dropped significantly. The majority of pupils now move to lessons swiftly and with purpose. Far fewer pupils than previously now miss or are late to lessons. Furthermore, corridors and spaces around the school site are now calmer and quieter, meaning that pupils can learn without interruptions. For a very small number of pupils, however, this approach is not as effective. Leaders recognise the need to tackle the internal truancy of these few pupils with greater rigour.

Behaviour has significantly improved over the last three months. Fights, which were previously commonplace, are now rare and infrequent. Pupils are more assured that, if fights take place, they will be dealt with by staff. Pupils note the high levels of staff and leader visibility around the school. They value the opportunities this offers to develop positive relationships with staff. They reference the increasing respect with which staff speak to them. Behaviour in lessons is now more calm and focused than previously. In the vast majority of lessons, classrooms are quiet and purposeful places of learning. There are still, however, instances when the renewed high expectations of pupil conduct are not consistently enacted by staff. In these lessons, pupils experience some disruption to their learning. The school recognises the need to ensure the renewed expectations are applied with greater consistency. Incidents of bullying are also now significantly lower than previously. For most pupils, there is now confidence that, when bullying happens, it will be dealt with well by staff. However, this is not an opinion shared by everyone. A minority of pupils and parents feel that bullying is still something that the school needs to address with greater effectiveness.

Attendance is now a higher priority in the school. Effective processes are in place so that, when pupils are absent, the school follows up swiftly with families. A family liaison officer has added capacity to the team that works with pupils with the highest levels of absence. However, too many pupils do not attend school regularly enough. This is especially the case for the most vulnerable pupils and particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), who miss more education than their peers. While there has been some work to address this, leaders lack a sharp enough understanding of the specific barriers to good attendance for pupils. This means that, while the school undertakes many different activities to improve attendance, it is not having a big enough or rapid enough impact on the attendance of the most vulnerable pupils.

Pupils now experience a more consistently positive experience in lessons than previously. The recent introduction of the 'Sandwich Start' ensures that all lessons begin with the same routine. This adds consistency to processes and expectations across the school. Pupils value the opportunity to review their most recent learning. Leaders intend, as this embeds, for this to support pupils in recalling and recapping their learning so that they can remember it in the longer term. However, this initiative is new and therefore the impact of this work on what pupils know and remember over time is not yet evident.

A revised curriculum offer is being developed to give pupils a greater choice of appropriate options for their study. There are tentative signs that this will mean an increased take up of the English Baccalaureate suite of qualifications, which indicates the increasing ambitions for pupils in the school. Further work has begun to address the quality of teaching in the school. Leaders have begun to identify the features of effective teaching they expect from staff. A team of staff to develop the quality of teaching and the consistency with which this is being delivered is being established. However, this is not yet in place.

The school has become more outward-looking. It has sought to create professional networks with external partners, and other trusts and schools both locally and nationally, to benefit from wider expertise. Leaders use these networks to increasingly quality assure their work and assure themselves that it is having an impact. The school has implemented some of the strategies identified through this work, and more are planned. These are starting to have a positive impact on the school, particularly in terms of behaviour and culture, which have markedly improved.

The governing body now holds leaders to account with greater rigour. The school's progress is measured against clearly defined and appropriate priorities. Governors take steps to assure themselves that leaders' actions are having the impact they need to. There is a recognition of the scale of the work that is still needed to ensure that pupils receive an effective quality of education. However, staff, pupils and parents are unified in their positivity about the purposeful direction the school is taking.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees of the Sandwich Technology School trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Marian Feeley
His Majesty's Inspector