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Dear Mrs Rogers

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of The Winsford Academy

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 16 November 2023, 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 a judgement of requires improvement at its previous graded (section 5) inspection.

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 the acting executive headteacher, other senior leaders, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust, trustees and members of the local governing body 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 other staff, met with pupils and reviewed 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:

- ensure that the fragility in staffing is addressed so that there is a consistent approach to the delivery of the new curriculums

- ensure that those pupils, and especially pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), who are frequently absent from school attend regularly
- ensure that staff adhere to the new behaviour policy so that behaviour is managed consistently well and pupils enjoy their learning without interruption
- ensure that those pupils who are taken out of class receive the support that they need to rejoin their lessons in a timely manner.

Main findings

You were appointed to the role of acting headteacher towards the end of the 2023 summer term. At this time, a number of other leaders were appointed to acting senior leadership positions. There have also been some changes at middle leadership level and several teachers have left the school, while others have joined. There remain a number of teaching vacancies.

The school, with the support of the trust, has acted quickly to tackle the shortcomings identified in the previous inspection. Despite the considerable changes in staffing, the school has maintained a clear focus on bringing about improvement, while remaining mindful of staff's workload. The school improvement plan sets out clear and appropriate priorities. The trust and members of the local governing body are keeping a close overview of the school's progress. This support and challenge is aiding the school's work to provide a good standard of education.

Developing a broad and ambitious curriculum has been a clear focus since the last inspection. For example, the religious education curriculum is now in place for all pupils, including those in key stage 4. Subject curriculums have been reviewed so that it is clearer what pupils should know and be able to do as they move through the school. Established, permanent teachers have benefited from training that is helping them to implement the revised curriculums effectively. They are better at identifying the gaps in pupils' learning and then adjusting their teaching to help pupils remember more over time. Even so, these positive changes have not had time to make a difference to pupils' outcomes at the end of Year 11. In the 2023 unvalidated data, pupils' progress and attainment remained below the national average.

Staffing across subjects remains fragile, with a number of temporary teachers who are covering vacant teaching posts. This is leading to inconsistencies in pupils' learning. It means that while pupils' achievement is improving in some areas, it is not good enough in others.

Alongside the developments in the curriculum, the school has strengthened the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There are now effective processes for identifying the needs of pupils with SEND. Information about pupils' needs is shared systematically with teachers so that they are better equipped to adapt their teaching.

The school has put a clear and effective programme for reading into place since the previous inspection. This is helping to promote a love of reading across each key stage. It also means that those pupils who find reading difficult are receiving the support that they need to read fluently. This is helping them to access other curriculum subjects.

The new behaviour policy has set much higher expectations for pupils' conduct. The new approach means that there are a range of rooms that are mostly used effectively to support individual pupils who find managing their behaviour difficult. This has reduced interruptions in lessons and the number of pupils out on corridors. However, some pupils do not receive the support that they need to make sure that they can rejoin their class quickly and continue with their learning. This means a small number of pupils are not accessing the full curriculum.

Some staff are not adhering to the new behaviour policy. This means that pupils' behaviour is not managed consistently well. As a result, some learning is disrupted and this hinders pupils from learning all that they should. Pupils' attendance has become a higher priority. Recent staff appointments mean that there is greater capacity to check on pupils' attendance each day and over time. Even so, there are some pupils, especially those with SEND, who do not attend school regularly enough.

The school has harnessed the support from the trust to build leadership capacity and to assist in the development of subject curriculums.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the CEO of the Fallibroome Trust, 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

Eleanor Overland
His Majesty's Inspector