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Dear Ms Mackie

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Minehead Middle School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 22 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 was the third monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in January 2023.

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 your senior leadership team, the interim chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust, the interim director of education and trustees the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. I evaluated school documentation, such as school improvement plans, external reports, and evaluations, and I met with middle leaders and a group of pupils. 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 having serious weaknesses.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

This was the third monitoring visit since the school's section 5 inspection in January 2023. Since the last monitoring visit in June, you have expanded the senior leadership team with the appointment of an assistant headteacher focused on raising the standards of teaching and learning. For the first time in a long time, you have been able to recruit teachers and the school is fully staffed. The trust continues to progress its merger with another trust. Although this is currently paused and has not happened as quickly as originally anticipated, the support and guidance you receive as a school is well-brokered. As a result, you feel the internal support from the trust colleagues you work with is both rigorous, focused and making a positive difference.

The impact of having stability with staffing has allowed you and your senior leadership team to communicate a coherent vision about the next steps for school improvement. This work is just a few weeks in. The need for staff to cover lessons has been considerably reduced. Professional development has been carefully planned to support the priorities of the school. You have introduced structures and lines of management to develop the expertise of middle leaders. As a result, staff are starting to feel more confident. With greater consistency of staffing, pupils are building stronger relationships with their teachers.

With the leadership appointment to focus on the quality of education, you and your team have implemented a cycle of monitoring and review of the curriculum. This is new and has only completed its first term. This work is planned to inform future areas for training and development. Within this, leaders are starting to look more closely at the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) within the classroom. The processes for identifying pupils and strategies to support their needs are in place. The leadership of the provision for pupils with SEND has supported colleagues to make sure the work of learning support assistants is becoming better embedded. You recognise there is now further work to do to help teachers make well informed decisions about how to adapt the curriculum for all. Leaders have a clear ambition about what this will look like. In some lessons, pupils do not have their learning deepened. The chosen activities for learning do not support this. Work has commenced to develop the curriculum and explicitly identify what pupils will learn and when. This is planned in some subjects, and other subjects are in the earlier stages of reviewing this.

There is a rigorous and stepped approach to implementing a sustainable culture of positive change around behaviour. This is starting to embed. Staff and pupils have a clear understanding of the behaviour system. Most teachers now use this with consistency and pupils know the expectations. Routines to prepare pupils for learning are becoming established. For example, the way that pupils line up at the end of breaktime and transition around school is calmer. You have seen a decrease in low level behaviours disturbing lessons. During visits to lessons, we saw pupils demonstrating more positive attitudes towards their learning. You have a robust understanding of the behaviour data. A few older pupils display more demonstrable behaviours. This is becoming fewer in number and there is a more cohesive approach to managing it. Suspensions have reduced but internal exclusions remain high. The imminent introduction of a reset room is planned

to support pupils and reduce the number of internal exclusions. Your work to embed a positive culture of behaviour is starting to take root.

Leaders' reporting to trustees and the academic improvement board has become more precise. As a result, trustees provide more challenge through their strategic oversight. You and your team continue in earnest to build trust and strengthen relationships with parents. This work is developing. By ensuring that there are better systems for communication, and more events that invite stakeholders into the school, you provide clearer forums for parents to feedback and communicate.

Along with the support of the trusts you are working with, you have welcomed external scrutiny and auditing of different aspects of the school. For example, a review of behaviour in the summer term provided detailed feedback. You have acted on this through your prioritising of actions for school improvement this academic year. As a result, school development plans are concise and have clarity of the next steps you are taking to continue with rapid improvement. These next-step plans are just a few weeks in but you and your team continue to act promptly to bring about change.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the interim CEO or equivalent of the Beacon Education Trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Hesketh
His Majesty's Inspector