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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
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Christopher White
Head of School
Hylands School
Chelmsford Road
Writtle
Chelmsford
Essex
CM1 3ET

Dear Mr White

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

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 10 July 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 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, other senior leaders and directors of The Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT), the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection and the first monitoring visit on 15 October 2024. I also visited a range of lessons and spoke to staff and pupils. I observed pupils' behaviour at the start of the school day, breaktime and lunchtime. I met with the school's special educational needs and disabilities coordinator and middle leaders. I reviewed the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation. 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 monitoring inspection, there have been some changes in leadership and staffing. The school has recently appointed several new subject leaders and the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator. The school has put in place an effective programme of professional development for subject and pastoral leaders. This is building the school's capacity to sustain and build upon the improvements it has made. The school now employs more permanent staff than has often been the case in recent years. It has decided not to offer courses in the sixth form in the 2025/26 academic year.

The quality of the curriculum has continued to develop since my previous monitoring visit. Pupils follow a broad and increasingly ambitious curriculum. Staff have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. Leaders have ensured the curriculum is well sequenced to develop important knowledge. The school has identified opportunities for pupils to connect and build upon their prior knowledge. In some subjects, further work is needed to precisely identify and teach key vocabulary so that this 'sticks' in pupils' memories.

The school has ensured that teachers are increasingly consistent and effective in how they structure lessons and teach. The use of the 'Hylands must-haves' helps pupils know what to expect in lessons. This helps them settle in lessons quickly and focus. Teachers follow consistent structures in lessons. For example, they recap prior knowledge and clearly model and introduce new learning. Pupils then apply and practise what they have learned. Staff know the learning needs of pupils well. Adaptations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are increasingly effective as they align with these pupils' individual learning plans.

Teachers often use questioning and other checks to effectively gauge how well pupils have learned the intended curriculum. Sometimes, however, staff do not apply these checks on learning well enough. This means that sometimes gaps and misconceptions in pupils' knowledge and understanding are not addressed quickly enough. At other times, pupils do not move swiftly enough on to new content. When this happens, pupils do not learn as well as they should.

Pupils increasingly enjoy and engage with their learning. They told me that teaching has improved. Younger pupils now say that lessons are often 'fun'. As pupils' behaviour and staff expertise have improved, pupils have more opportunities to apply and discuss what they have learned, such as carrying out practical experiments in science. Although this is not yet reflected in published outcomes, pupils' knowledge and understanding are improving.

Pupils make good use of the school's large and well-stocked library. The school provides structured opportunities for pupils to read and to enhance their literacy skills. The school robustly identifies and tracks how well pupils read. When any pupils need additional support to improve their accuracy and fluency, the school provides them with the help they need to do so.

Pupils said that behaviour out of lessons is much calmer than it was. The school is a friendly and increasingly positive place to be. It is now the norm for pupils to be 'responsible, respectful and resilient'. The school has high expectations of how pupils should conduct themselves in lessons. Staff know how to apply rewards and sanctions in line with the school's behaviour policy. Leaders intervene effectively to support staff. Consequently, disruption to lessons has decreased dramatically. While suspensions remain high, their number, especially for repeat suspensions, continues to fall. Some staff are not as consistent in how they follow the school's policy. When this happens, some pupils interrupt others' learning.

Most pupils now attend school regularly. Leaders are tenacious in following up and addressing the causes of pupils' non-attendance. They work closely with families and other external services to help pupils to attend more often. Some pupils do not, for a range of reasons, attend well enough. This affects the overall figures for pupil absence.

Leaders' actions continue to improve the school. There have been discernible further improvements in how pupils engage with their learning and how well they behave. This means that teachers can teach, and pupils can learn. The quality of teaching continues to improve so that pupils learn more. The school, with the support of the trust, has avoided 'quick fixes'. It ensures that staff have the knowledge they need to carry out their roles effectively. The school has made effective use of external support to measure and guide its work with purpose and precision. Staff are highly positive about working here. They are well supported with their well-being and workload.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. They learn about topics such as healthy relationships and the importance of consent. There are opportunities for pupils to broaden their interests and be active citizens. Pupils, for instance, participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Pupils receive clear and impartial careers advice on their next steps. They meet a range of employers and further education providers. Leaders know that they should ensure pupils engage with first-hand experiences of work.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Woodley
His Majesty's Inspector