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Sinead Green
Principal
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Dear Ms Green

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Kenton School

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 three judgements of requires improvement at its previous graded (section 5) inspections.

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, the chief executive officer (CEO), the executive principal and the chair of the local governing body and a trustee 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 met with the curriculum leaders for English and humanities, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. I reviewed the single central record, discussed the culture of safeguarding across the school and analysed your school's behaviour and attendance information. I have considered all of 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.

Main findings

You were appointed as principal at Kenton School in March 2023. Since your appointment, the multi-academy trust has recruited a significant number of new staff, including an executive headteacher and several curriculum directors, to help support the school.

Your school has prioritised improving the quality of education. This includes implementing new strategies to delivering the curriculum, such as a new lesson structure. Although teachers tend to employ these strategies consistently, some teachers use them more effectively than others.

With the support of curriculum directors from the trust, leaders have improved the curriculum. This has led to improvements in published outcomes. In some stronger subjects, leaders have made refinements to the knowledge that they want pupils to learn. For example, in English, leaders have changed the order in which some topics are taught to help pupils connect new learning to previously taught content. However, there are some subjects where the curriculum has had to be completely redesigned. Some of these changes are still being embedded. In these subjects, there is more to do with the curriculum to ensure it will address gaps in pupils' knowledge.

Your school has secured significant improvements in pupils' behaviour. Leaders have raised everyone's expectations of pupils' conduct. New behaviour systems have had a positive impact. Disruption to learning is minimised. Suspensions and removals from lessons have reduced dramatically compared to this time last year. Leaders have also thought carefully about the support for pupils who continue to show challenging behaviour. You and your leaders have established the new 'Aspire' provision to offer targeted support to further improve the behaviour of some pupils. One pupil told me that the Aspire provision had been 'life changing'.

Leaders use a range of strategies to promote good attendance. Pupils' attendance has improved since the previous inspection. It remains that some pupils do not attend school often enough. The number of pupils who are persistently absent from school, although improved, is still too high. For some pupils, such as those with education, health and care plans, attendance has improved significantly. You, quite rightly, have identified pupils' attendance as a key improvement area for the school. Senior leaders know that there is more to do to improve attendance. Visits to lessons show the impact of lost learning because of poor attendance. Too many pupils have gaps in their knowledge due to absence.

The school has clear improvement plans to address the next steps identified in the previous inspection. This plan is monitored and evaluated by you, other leaders in school and by the trust. You have accessed support from another multi-academy trust to review systems for behaviour and attendance. You, and trust leaders, have ensured that the school is improving quickly. You are aware that there is more work to do in relation to pupils' attendance and the quality of education in some subjects. The CEO, governors and

trustees know the school well. They have ensured that the school has more stable staffing and are better supported by the growing infrastructure within the trust.

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

Yours sincerely

Stuart Voyce
His Majesty's Inspector