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Ben Pearce
Principal
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Dear Mr Pearce

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of City of Peterborough Academy

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

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other school leaders, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust and trust executives 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 discussed safeguarding with the safeguarding lead, including a review of the school's single central record, met with groups of pupils and visited lessons. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

City of Peterborough Academy remains inadequate and has serious weaknesses. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the category of concern to be removed.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Since the last inspection, additional leaders have taken up their positions. This includes a special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator (SENDCo). Executive leaders from the trust have also added experience and expertise to the leadership capacity of the school. My main focus during this visit was on how leaders have begun to address the

issues around behaviour and attitudes, and leadership and management, highlighted in the recent inspection.

You and leaders have discussed these issues in detail with pupils. You have used these discussions to develop an understanding of their underlying causes. This has helped ensure that the plans you and your team have developed are robust and targeted. They tackle the problems head on.

There is a completely different approach to the use of alternative provision. You design programmes around the specific needs of individual pupils. There has been a significant reduction in pupils who access provision through external providers. Alternative provision is now a short-term intervention. Pastoral and safeguarding leaders work collaboratively with the SENDCo. This results in programmes that are centred around the whole child. Your team maintains regular contact with pupils attending alternative provision. They check on their welfare and chase absenteeism. They are beginning to consider how to reintegrate pupils back to learning alongside their peers. However, you acknowledge there is still some work needed on how entry to, and exit from, alternative provision is defined and managed. There are some early signs of improvement, but it is too early to determine the long-term impact.

The changes to the behaviour policy have been clearly described to staff and pupils. You have explained what is an acceptable way to speak to others and clearly defined what is unacceptable. Pupils value this clarity. They are equally positive about how additional learning has helped them understand protected characteristics. They are beginning to see difference in its widest context and celebrate the diverse community they are part of. Staff have had additional training to spot the use of derogatory language. If pupils use this type of language in lessons, this is dealt with immediately. This makes it clear to all that it is not acceptable to use certain words.

Pupils feel that the culture of the school has begun to change. However, there are still some pupils who use language that others may find offensive. They generally do not intend to cause upset. However, they do not see using these words, which they regard as part of their day-to-day vocabulary, as a problem.

Bullying has been raised to the same level of priority as safeguarding. Reported incidents are tracked and monitored in the same way as safeguarding concerns. Leaders are expected to react in the same timely manner to support pupils who have reported being bullied. You have given pupils reassurances about the seriousness of how you will deal with reported incidents of bullying. This has begun to restore pupils' confidence, although they are not as certain when they talk about online bullying.

Safeguarding remains effective. You have addressed some of the systematic issues in ensuring that pupils and their families get the help they need in a timely manner. You have clearly set out expectations of how and when safeguarding and pastoral staff respond to a concern.

Trust leaders have a clear and detailed understanding of the school. They are highly supportive in helping school leaders address the areas for improvement. They have carefully balanced providing support with challenging your thinking. Their support is effective. It has helped you plot the path to improvement, and ensure that the improvement is sustainable. Trust leaders regularly report progress to the experienced trust board, who take an active role in overseeing the improvements.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Greenwood Academies Trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Peterborough City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Dave Gibson
His Majesty's Inspector