

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



01 March 2024

Lynn Bennett
Principal
Hurstmere School
Hurst Road
Sidcup
Kent
DA15 9AW

Dear Mrs Bennett

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Hurstmere School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 02 February 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 took place because the school has received two successive 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 and other senior leaders, the chair of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority 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 curriculum leaders for mathematics, history, English and religious education, and with other staff. I visited lessons in a number of subjects. I also spoke with pupils and observed break and lunchtimes. I reviewed a range of documents, including the single central record of pre-employment checks. 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 the strategies teachers use to check that pupils understand what they have learned are routinely applied.
- Ensure the recent work designed to support pupils' reading is implemented fully and with consistency.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, you have made changes to the senior leadership team, appointed a number of new middle leaders and added further leadership capacity to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

At the time of the last inspection, there were inconsistencies in the quality of curriculum design and implementation. Since then, you have acted swiftly to ensure that the curriculum focuses more clearly on the key knowledge that pupils must learn. This helps teachers to ensure that pupils are better supported to build their knowledge in a more coherent way in a variety of subjects. You are developing a 'Hurstmere way' of teaching in a strategic and considered way. You have provided staff with a well-focused programme of professional development. This has included supporting teachers to check more systematically what pupils have learned and developing strategies to embed learning in pupils' long-term memory. This work is helping pupils to know and remember more. You are aware that greater consistency in the application of these strategies across all areas of the school is essential to improve the quality of education further. You have also increased the leadership capacity of provision for pupils with SEND. This has resulted in staff receiving clearer guidance about how to support pupils' different needs, including those pupils at earlier stages of reading.

You, and your leaders, have ensured that the actions taken are rightly focused on the school's key priorities for improvement. You use the information you gather systematically to inform your decision-making and to quality assure the impact of your work. While these issues are not 'quick fixes', your work is resulting in a positive change in professional culture across the school. You have also carefully considered staff well-being and workload and are consultative in your approach, ensuring that staff are fully on board and are playing an active role in school improvement.

The previous inspection highlighted inconsistencies in the quality of pupils' behaviour, particularly in lessons. You have addressed this by raising expectations and providing pupils with clarity regarding those expectations. Staff are consistent in their application of the new behaviour policy. This has made a significant impact. Lessons now typically proceed without disruption. Pupils also behave in a calm and sensible manner at break and lunchtimes.

You have been working with a range of external partners, including the local authority and the Department for Education behaviour hub. You have commissioned targeted support for specific areas, including from an outstanding school. You have utilised the

contributions that these partners have made to your school improvement work and noted the need to manage this external support in a considered way.

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

Yours sincerely

Christian Hicks
His Majesty's Inspector