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Heather Widdup
Executive Principal
The Holgate Academy
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Dear Mrs Widdup

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of The Holgate Academy

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 13 and 14 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 June 2022.

During the inspection, Clive Worrell, Ofsted Inspector (OI), Gillian Martin, OI, Imtiaz Patel, OI, and I discussed with you and other senior leaders, the CEO of the multi-academy trust, a trustee, the chair of the local academy committee and other trust leaders 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. We also carried out visits to lessons, looked at samples of pupils' work, looked at documents related to safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and the school's curriculum, met with groups of staff and pupils, observed pupils' behaviour at unstructured times, visited the sixth-form centre and spoke with some alternative providers used by the school. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

The Holgate 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 inspection, in June 2022, there have been changes to senior leadership. The former principal has taken a different role in the trust, and you now oversee more of the school's work. A head of academy and two new assistant principals have been appointed to add capacity to the senior leadership team.

During this inspection, we focused on the areas for improvement that were identified at the last inspection. These areas related to pupils' behaviour and attendance, how bullying is dealt with, how teachers use assessment to check what pupils understand and remember over time, how pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported and how the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum develops pupils' understanding of fundamental British values and relationships. The evidence collected during the inspection shows that you, the senior leadership team and the trust have taken well-thought-out actions to improve the school. Other staffing changes, for example the introduction of assistant heads of year, have added capacity to key areas. This shows that you are focusing resources into the areas that need to improve.

The implementation of the curriculum is improving, as teachers are developing how they use assessment strategies to check pupils' understanding. For example, lessons start with recall activities to help pupils remember previous learning. These are not always used effectively. When used well, teachers question pupils to check they have understood key learning. They recap topics when pupils' learning is less secure. In some subjects, teachers use questioning well to identify and address misconceptions. It is not always clear from the work that pupils produce how gaps in learning and misconceptions are addressed. Leaders are aware that some inconsistencies remain in how teachers use assessment. You have implemented a coaching programme for teachers to work together to strengthen practice in this area.

The provision for pupils with SEND is improving. Leaders have ensured that teachers get information about how to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. This information is not always presented clearly for teachers. This means that some inconsistencies remain. In some subjects, such as mathematics, teachers ensure that the lesson activities they use support all pupils, including those with SEND. This helps them to access and progress through the curriculum. This is not the case in all subjects. Leaders are aware that this is an area they still need to work on. Leaders have prioritised reading, and the trust has provided effective support in this area. All pupils are assessed on their reading abilities. Pupils at the early stages of reading now get regular support. This means that they are starting to read more confidently and fluently. This is helping them to access the curriculum.

You have clearly set out the expectations for pupils' behaviour. You have ensured that staff and pupils understand the expectations through the focus on 'manners, determination and teamwork'. Staff now reward more pupils for meeting expectations. This work is having a positive impact on pupils' conduct in lessons and during unstructured times. Most lessons visited by inspectors were calm and orderly, and most pupils engaged well with learning activities. This is not always the case. Teachers do not

always challenge pupils who are off task. Only a few incidents of low-level disruption were observed by inspectors in lessons. Most pupils said that behaviour has improved but that some lessons still get disrupted by poor behaviour. Pupils also said that not all staff use the behaviour policy consistently. Leaders' work on supporting pupils with challenging behaviour is starting to have an impact. Suspensions, for example, are reducing. At unstructured times, there is appropriate staff supervision. Pupils' behaviour at these times has improved. Most pupils say that they feel safe in school. A few pupils commented that they did not always feel safe in some areas of the school, such as in the toilets. The recent refurbishment and staffing of the toilets are starting to help more pupils feel comfortable using these facilities. You are aware that inconsistencies remain with how staff manage pupils' behaviour. Leaders' work with the behaviour hub is at an early stage, and they are using this support to improve the behaviour culture in school.

The attendance of pupils is still too low and has not improved. Too many pupils are persistently absent from school and miss learning. You have added capacity to the pastoral team so that more staff support pupils to improve their attendance. Attendance systems are clear, and leaders ensure that parents understand the school's expectations for attendance. Staff know the barriers pupils have to good attendance and are starting to work well with these pupils. The impact of the school's actions to improve attendance is not yet evident. You are getting support from an attendance advisor to help make sustained improvements.

Leaders have ensured that pupils learn about different types of bullying through the PSHE curriculum. Messages in form time and in assemblies explain how pupils should treat each other. Leaders' expectations are set at as 'not ok at THA.' Most pupils understand this, and it helps them to treat others with respect. Leaders have also ensured that pupils are developing their understanding of protected characteristics. Bullying logs show that incidents are reducing. Most pupils spoken to during the inspection said that bullying has reduced. More pupils are confident that staff would deal with any bullying issues if they did occur. A few pupils said that staff do not always deal with bullying incidents quickly enough.

The PSHE curriculum is now enabling pupils to build their understanding of fundamental British values and relationships. The curriculum clearly sets out what pupils should learn and when. Pupils' understanding of fundamental British values has improved, and leaders have ensured that these values are regularly revisited in assemblies and form time. Pupils spoken to during the inspection could explain what they have learned about relationships. They said they have been taught about healthy relationships, consent and puberty. Leaders are aware that some staff do not deliver the PSHE curriculum well. This means that not all pupils have a secure understanding of fundamental British values.

Trustees and governors know the school well. They provide effective challenge to ensure leaders maintain their focus on the areas that need to improve. Trust leaders have provided a comprehensive range of support for senior and subject leaders. They have given the school extra leadership capacity and ensured that strategic leads in the trust

work closely with school leaders. They have used a national leader of education to quality assure the effectiveness of support.

The school is making use of external support through behaviour and attendance hubs. This work is at an early stage. You are determined to use this support to improve the school in these key areas.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Halcro
His Majesty's Inspector