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Dear Mrs Bakewell

Monitoring inspection of a school not in a category of concern of City Academy

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 12 March 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 and other senior leaders, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust, other trust leaders and the chair of the trust board 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 visited lessons, spoke to pupils at social times, looked at safeguarding records and reviewed the school improvement plan and self-evaluation summary. 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

The school is now experiencing more stability than was the case at the previous inspection. At that time, the school had recently merged with another and was operating

across two sites while significant renovation work was taking place. The school is now solely housed on the Langley Walk site. The current Year 11 is the final year group effected directly by the merger. There has also been some movement in the leadership team, and some shuffling of responsibilities, but you have been able to utilise the experience and expertise of existing staff when doing this. The school is now fully staffed.

The level of pupil movement at the school has noticeably increased. You welcome an increasing number of pupils who are new to the country. Through the trust's 'CORE Hello' provision, housed at another trust academy, these pupils are provided with extensive support in learning English before they start to learn the same curriculum as their peers.

You and your team are determinedly focused on the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. Your work has usefully extended more broadly than this, as you know this is crucial to improving pupils' outcomes. While there have been some small improvements in examination outcomes, you know these need to continue to improve at pace. There is a helpful programme of interventions in place for current Year 11 pupils. Lessons are focused on addressing any gaps in knowledge or misconceptions.

You have introduced a 'teaching and learning handbook' to provide clarity for staff about how you expect the curriculum to be delivered. This is supported by a comprehensive professional development programme. However, you rightly know that there is still some work to do. The quality of curriculum implementation is not of a sufficiently consistent standard across the school.

The school's work to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has strengthened since the previous inspection. The 'one-page profiles' have become more personalised, and you are now sensibly looking at how they can be used to support pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Some training sessions have helped staff to gain a stronger understanding of how to adapt activities to meet pupils' needs more accurately in their lessons.

The importance of all pupils becoming confident readers is a school and trust priority. There is effective support in place to help those who need to develop stronger reading skills. Older pupils support younger pupils through a peer reading programme. Useful action was taken to improve reading during form time following the previous inspection, including choosing books based on pupil voice. You are currently reviewing how these sessions could have an even more positive impact on pupils' reading skills and engagement.

You had rightly identified that there was also work needed to improve behaviour and attendance as you developed the new school culture following the merger. You and your team have a shared understanding of the importance of regular attendance if pupils are to benefit from the improvements you are making to the curriculum. The school's work to improve attendance is making a real difference. Attendance levels have improved for all groups of pupils and are much closer to the national averages than they were. There is a cohesive way of working between pastoral and safeguarding staff that results in detailed

discussions about the specific barriers or risks faced by key pupils. When necessary, safeguarding staff show persistence in ensuring that pupils receive the external support they need.

Pupils talk about how behaviour has improved during their time at the school, which can be seen in lessons that are calm and purposeful. You have introduced routines, such as the line up at the end of lunchtimes, to help pupils move sensibly around the school building. This also offers a useful 'reset' in the middle of the day. The number of suspensions has noticeably reduced. There has been an increase in the number of '100 minutes' consequences, but fewer of these are turning into suspensions.

Staff are committed to a shared aspiration for the pupils to achieve well and go on to have successful lives. You have ensured that this includes pupils learning about how to keep themselves safe from risks they may encounter, for example the police workshops that were taking place at the time of the inspection, as well as the diverse career options available to them in the future. Pupils praise the many opportunities and experiences now on offer to them, for example a recent Year 10 theatre trip to see 'An Inspector Calls'.

Your school improvement plan shows focused actions have been identified and that the impact of this work is regularly reviewed by school and trust leaders. Where helpful, you make use of external support to provide an objective review of improvements made to the quality of education. Trust leaders and trustees are honest and pragmatic in their appraisal of the school and how it needs to further improve. The trust has ensured there is increased school improvement capacity to support senior and middle leaders in moving the school forward. Consequently, there is clear progress being made at the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Nicola Beech
His Majesty's Inspector