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Kim Greenwood
Principal
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Dear Mrs Greenwood

Monitoring inspection of a school not in a category of concern of Highfield Leadership Academy

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on Wednesday 22 October 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, the chair of the local accountability board and a representative of the local authority the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. I also visited lessons, reviewed documentation, spoke to staff and pupils, observed behaviour at social times and reviewed safeguarding records. 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

Following the last inspection, the school experienced a brief period of leadership instability. A new principal joined the school in June 2024. The trust has worked closely with the principal to increase capacity in several areas of the school's provision. This included restructuring and expanding the school's senior leadership team. For example, two vice principals joined the school in January 2025. In addition, more staff have been appointed to the attendance, pastoral and safeguarding teams. A new special educational needs coordinator has been in post since November 2024.

In the last academic year, the school had a high number of teaching vacancies which were filled by supply teachers. In addition, an increase in the number of pupils on roll meant that more staff were needed. The vast majority of teaching vacancies have been filled so that pupils are now taught by subject specialists.

The school has taken a strategic approach to bringing about improvements to the quality of education that pupils receive. However, this work did not have enough time to make a difference to the 2024 published data. High rates of pupil absence, turbulence in staffing and weaknesses in teachers' subject expertise hindered the achievement of pupils at the end of Year 11 in 2024.

This picture does not reflect the current position of the school. Increased leadership capacity, stable staffing and improved levels of pupil attendance mean that the school's work to improve teaching and learning are bearing fruit. This is beginning to help pupils to make the progress that they should through the curriculum.

The work to develop teachers' expertise is ongoing and supported by colleagues from within the trust. For instance, trust staff have worked with subject leaders to ensure that quality assurance processes are rigorous. However, the large number of new staff, including a high proportion of early career teachers, creates an additional challenge for leaders in ensuring that teaching is consistently effective.

The school has clearly defined 'non-negotiables' of teaching. Most staff incorporate these into their practice as the norm. Weekly 'practice clinics' focus on developing one aspect of teaching at a time and staff receive focused and timely feedback to help them improve. Where appropriate, carefully tailored support is available for staff through a coaching programme. That said, inconsistency in teaching remains. For instance, some staff lack a secure understanding of the purpose of some lesson activities. This hinders how well some pupils learn curriculum content.

The school has ensured that there are structures in place which enable teachers to respond to assessment information. For instance, teachers frequently review how securely pupils know and understand key learning. Subject teams use this information to review and refine the curriculum, identifying where important concepts need to be revisited or retaught. This is beginning to address gaps in pupils' knowledge. In addition, teachers typically use a range of appropriate strategies to check pupils' understanding during

lessons. However, some teachers do not use the information from these checks as well as they should to inform their teaching.

Since the previous inspection, the school has prioritised supporting pupils to read well. Staff know which pupils in key stage 4 struggle with reading. A range of support has been put in place to help these pupils, delivered by staff with suitable experience and training. There are early indications that this support is helping pupils to read with more fluency and confidence. The school is continuing to develop its approach to measuring the impact of these strategies to ensure that they are effective.

The school's approach to tackling pupils' absence has strengthened considerably since the last inspection. Processes and systems have been streamlined and implemented with rigour. This has enabled staff to work proactively. For example, work to support pupils in Year 7 who may be at risk of persistent absence began before they joined the school. Actions to improve pupils' attendance have borne fruit. Across all pupil groups, including the most vulnerable, rates of attendance are markedly higher than at the same time in the last academic year. Similarly, rates of persistent absence have reduced rapidly. Nevertheless, challenges remain in sustaining these higher levels of attendance. In addition, although attendance has markedly improved overall, some groups of pupils still do not attend school as often as they should.

The trust has prioritised working closely with school leaders to ensure that there is sufficient capacity in leadership and staffing to overcome contextual challenges and drive improvement. Trust personnel have worked closely with staff to help develop their expertise. In some areas, particularly increasing pupils' attendance, there are convincing signs of improvement.

Leaders at all levels are sharply focused on continuing to move the school forward. Their work is informed by strong strategic oversight and effective monitoring. Furthermore, they have ensured that staff, pupils, and parents and carers understand why changes are needed and are equipped to manage them well. In a time of much change, this has helped to establish a culture of care characterised by warm relationships between staff, pupils and their families.

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

Yours sincerely

Sally Rix
His Majesty's Inspector