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Hannah Jones
Principal
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Dear Mrs Jones

Urgent inspection of Monkton Wood Academy

Following my visit with Matthew Barnes, His Majesty's Inspector and Sara Berry, His Majesty's Inspector to the school on 20 and 21 May 2025, I write on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and the time you took to discuss behaviour and safeguarding in the school.

The inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for urgent inspections. The inspection was carried out because His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills was concerned about behaviour and attitudes at the school and also wished to determine the effectiveness of arrangements for safeguarding.

We do not give graded judgements on urgent inspections. However, if we find some evidence that overall standards may be declining, but where no serious concerns have been identified, then the next inspection will normally be a graded inspection, which will be carried out under section 5 of the Act. If we have serious concerns, we will deem the urgent inspection as a graded inspection immediately.

We considered evidence that included:

- the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements;
- observations of pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning in lessons;
- observations of pupils' behaviour throughout the day, including discussions with pupils;

- documentary evidence about pupils' behaviour, attendance and attitudes; and
- discussions with governors and trustees, leaders (including trust leaders) and staff.

Having evaluated the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and those responsible for governance have taken effective action to improve behaviour and secure consistently positive attitudes to learning.

Arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Behaviour and attitudes

Since the school opened as an academy in December 2023, leaders have rightly prioritised improving pupils' behaviour. Staff and pupils are clear about expectations in lessons and at other times of the school day. Lessons are typically calm and there is little low-level disruption. At times, expectations for what pupils will achieve in lessons are not high enough. Some pupils are not as engaged in their learning as they should be. Pupils who attend the specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities behave consistently well. Students in the sixth form act maturely and work together in productive, constructive ways.

The majority of pupils form positive relationships with each other. They socialise well together and develop strong friendships. Bullying is not tolerated and is dealt with when it occurs. Most pupils are confident about reporting problems to staff. The school is tackling remaining issues resolutely, such as the infrequent use of derogatory language by some pupils. Pupils and staff rightly recognise the improvements in behaviour at the school. The school's use of suspensions and exclusions to tackle poor behaviour has reduced. Rewards for good behaviour and effort are increasingly valued by pupils. Pupils' rates of attendance are rising overall because of the school's effective actions.

The school's otherwise effective approaches to managing behaviour are not working as well as they need to for a minority of vulnerable pupils. These pupils are not benefiting enough from what the school offers. They do not comply consistently with the school's expectations for behaviour and attendance. While the school is ambitious to include all pupils positively in the life of the school, this is not yet fully realised in practice. There are marked improvements for some of these pupils because of the school's actions. However, leaders and staff know that more needs to be done in order for this group of pupils to flourish.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness. They know what the key next steps are to ensure that pupils' behaviour and attitudes are securely good. The school has strong systems in place to track pupils' attendance. These systems allow staff and leaders to focus their work to support pupils effectively. While the school has processes in place to track and analyse behaviour incidents, these lack the same level of

precision and sharpness as those for attendance. Leaders have recently already begun to revise these behaviour systems.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding processes are robust and well managed. The records that the school keeps are comprehensive. Knowledgeable and well-trained staff refer concerns appropriately and leaders follow these up rigorously. Pupils receive the care and support that they need. The school works with external agencies well, making sure that the right additional help is secured when required. The school carries out the correct checks on leaders, staff and volunteers to ensure that they are suitable to work with young people. The school manages any allegations about members of staff appropriately.

Leaders prioritise safeguarding and have established an open and vigilant culture. Staff have a strong understanding of the signs of potential risks, including those more specifically relevant to the school. Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe online and when using social media. They also learn about a wide range of other risks, such as the dangers of knife crime. Pupils are taught about the importance of making and sustaining healthy, consensual relationships. They are encouraged to report any concerns or worries that they might have to staff and are confident that these will be tackled sensitively and well.

Additional support

The predecessor school, Heathfield Community School, was judged to be inadequate when it was inspected by Ofsted in March 2023. Inspectors found that behaviour was poor and that, as a result, many pupils felt unsafe. Safeguarding was judged to be ineffective. The trust has taken effective action to remedy weaknesses in a range of ways since the school opened as an academy. Indeed, to the trust's credit, it provided support to the predecessor school before it joined the trust.

The trust has helped to establish ambitious expectations for pupils' behaviour and attendance, including developing the policies and processes to underpin these. Trust officers contribute important support for leadership in the school, provide training for staff and regularly monitor the school's progress. This includes support in vital areas such as safeguarding. The trust has helped the school to stabilise staffing, recruiting new staff and leaders. The school benefits from accessing expertise in other schools in the trust.

Trustees and members of the local academy council keep close oversight over both behaviour and safeguarding in the school. They have an accurate understanding of the school's priorities and progress. They are realistic about what the school has achieved so far and what needs to improve further. This means the trust provides the right support and challenge for the school's leaders.

Priorities for further improvement

- The school's approaches to managing pupils' behaviour are sometimes not implemented fully. Some pupils do not engage enough in lessons because expectations are not yet consistently high enough. The school should ensure that staff are supported to put the agreed approaches into practice fully so that pupils' attitudes to learning improve further.
- The school is not meeting the behavioural needs of a minority of pupils effectively enough. These pupils do not, therefore, rise consistently to the school's expectations of behaviour and attendance. Building on its existing work to develop inclusion, the school should further develop and adapt its approaches to support these pupils so that they flourish.
- The school's information about rates and patterns of behaviour incidents is not as sharp as it could be. As a result, some of the school's actions to further improve behaviour are not targeted as precisely as they could be. The school should continue to develop how it tracks and analyses behaviour incidents and use this information to focus and maximise the effectiveness of its subsequent work.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer or equivalent of the Cabot Learning Federation, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Haynes
His Majesty's Inspector