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Dear Mr Bennet

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Melbourn Village College

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 13 June 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 was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in July 2023.

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, the chief executive officer (CEO) of The Cam Academy Trust, the director of education from the trust, the chair of the local advisory board, the head of school, other senior leaders and staff 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 pupils, visited lessons, looked at a sample of pupils' books, checked school improvement documentation and reviewed the school's system for safeguarding. I considered responses to Ofsted Parent View alongside the Ofsted surveys for staff and pupils. In addition, I took into account two letters. 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 be no longer judged as having serious weaknesses.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

In response to the findings of the last inspection, The Cam Academy Trust altered how it holds the school to account. The trust appointed a school improvement board. This was in addition to the local advisory board. Its remit was to drive forward rapid change to enable the school to improve. The trust has invested significantly in staffing. The senior leadership team has doubled in size. Trust staff working at the school have brought added capacity. This includes an experienced special educational needs coordinator. The associate team has expanded, and the school is now fully staffed in this area. The current executive headteacher and head of school were in post at the time of the last inspection.

During this monitoring visit, the focus was on the school's actions to improve staff's assessment of the curriculum, provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), pupils' behaviour and the school's use of tutor time. These were the recommendations from the last inspection. I also checked that safeguarding arrangements remained effective. The school's Year 11 pupils were on study leave and a third of the year group for Year 10 were attending post-16 providers' open days.

Staff have undertaken training so that they consider closely how well pupils know and understand the curriculum. The focus on sharper, objective-led teaching and questioning is enabling teachers to check progress effectively. There is greater consistency in how staff share feedback with pupils. In departments where processes are embedded, pupils find the points for reflection from their teachers helpful. They act on the advice teachers give. Pupils are now taking greater pride in their work, focusing on ensuring they complete the tasks set. A pilot of parental involvement with feedback in English is having early signs of success. In some subjects, there is ongoing work to align assessment with the content of the curriculum.

Improving provision for pupils with SEND is a school priority. Staff receive regular training on how to adapt their lessons so that pupils with SEND can access the curriculum. This includes considering how teachers deploy and interact with teaching assistants in lessons. The SEND team members have reviewed the information that teachers receive in relation to pupils' needs. They have made sure that suggested strategies on pupils' individual support plans are appropriate. The plans are clear about the steps to take to help pupils with SEND learn well. The school is working with another school to improve the systems for logging and reviewing information. This is so they are easier for staff to use. There is greater communication and cooperation with the staff in the school's specially resourced provision for SEND, the Cabin. Parents who have children supported by the Cabin expressed how much they appreciate staff's positive work.

Behaviour is getting better. The safer corridors strategy is working. Senior leaders are highly visible around the school site. Pupil movement out of lessons has stopped. Staff have clamped down on pupils' use of offensive language. As one pupil expressed, for the opinions of many, 'It is not worth going into isolation for.' Pupils appreciate the stricter approach. The school's work on improving attitudes is helping boys recognise their

inappropriate language and interactions. As a result, such occurrences are lessening. However, some girls do not meet the school's expectations for conduct or manners. This includes how they disregard the uniform policy, dressing inappropriately for school. Some pupils continue to display intolerant attitudes towards others, for instance giggling and nudging each other when a pupil with SEND expresses their view. The school is getting quicker at dealing with incidents of bullying. The streamlining of safeguarding and behaviour systems helps staff see more readily when issues occur.

There is a stronger start to the day. Tutor time is now structured. Staff consistently follow the school's curriculum for this. Pupils are of the view that the session is now purposeful and of value. As pupils move through the school day, their experience of lessons varies. While staff have a shared understanding of how to respond to behaviour, low-level disruption remains an issue in some classes. This is particularly the case with lower sets and those classes that have a stand-in teacher. This frustrates pupils who want to learn so they can move to a higher set. Yet, they do not have the confidence to 'call out' others' behaviour to support the change that they want.

Safeguarding remains effective. Pupils have the confidence that staff will deal with their concerns as they arise. The school has acted on the advice and guidance from the local authority in its recent safeguarding audit. Staff know and understand their safeguarding responsibilities. They are up to date in their knowledge of the latest government guidance.

Staff are positive about working in the school. They feel supported by senior leaders and the trust to make the necessary changes to improve the school. They share the collective vision to improve on all fronts. This includes continuing to develop the school's literacy programme, with its focus on reading. The school improvement plan gives staff a clear steer about the school's priorities, when to complete actions by and how these will be monitored. The trust checks closely through its visits and through the reports it receives how well the school is progressing towards its goals. Some parents are not yet convinced that the school is progressing with the areas it needs to improve. The school and the trust know they have more work to do to regain the trust of the parent community.

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

Yours sincerely

Liz Smith
His Majesty's Inspector