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Shaun Willis
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Willis

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

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 25 February 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, other senior leaders, the regional director of the trust and governors, 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 observed the start of the day, visited lessons, talked to pupils, looked at their work and met with staff. I reviewed the school's self-evaluation and other documents related to school improvement and governance. 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.

The school should take further action to:

- Ensure that staff have a consistently secure understanding of how to most effectively deliver the aims of the curriculum.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection in March 2024, there have been a number of changes to the leadership of the school, including within governance. The trust has supported the school during this period of transition. You were appointed as headteacher in November 2024, having been deputy headteacher previously.

The previous inspection report outlined two areas for improvement relating to the quality of education, including the reading curriculum. Leaders have created more clarity about which pedagogical approaches should be used to ensure that pupils know and remember what they have learned. This has included refining the professional development programme so that staff have a better understanding of not just what needs to be taught, but how to do this most effectively, including the use of assessment. This is starting to have an impact and is working well in some areas of the school. However, there is more work to do to ensure that the implementation of the curriculum is consistently effective. Leaders have also made changes to the Year 10 and Year 11 school day so pupils in these year groups have more opportunities to fill gaps in their learning. Currently, the school's published outcomes do not reflect the improvements that have been made.

The school now has a sequential reading programme in place for younger pupils who have fallen behind. Leaders have ensured that the needs of these pupils are accurately identified. Pupils who need support with phonics receive the help they need, and you have ensured that staff have the relevant expertise. The new programme is being closely monitored so leaders can evaluate the impact of this work. Moving forward, you know that you need to plan carefully to ensure that this support continues to be available as pupils move through the school.

The leadership team is stable and well-respected by staff. Periods of last year were turbulent, and parents' views of the school were largely negative. Since the last inspection, with support from the trust's regional director, the number of complaints made to the school has significantly reduced. In addition, you have ensured that policies, such as those related to behaviour and staff absence, have been rewritten and are applied consistently and fairly. Staff absence has now decreased, and this has had a positive impact on the delivery of the curriculum and staff morale. Governors, with support from the trust, have asked challenging questions and held leaders to account. A recent joint review of the school, with the trust and an external agency, provided clear and direct feedback, which the school is using to drive improvements.

The third area for improvement on the previous inspection report was to increase attendance. Since the previous inspection, leaders have prioritised this by building capacity in the pastoral team and appointing an attendance coordinator. There are now clear and robust systems in place to tackle poor attendance. This has had a positive impact, for example the number of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced

significantly. However, attendance is still too low. We discussed plans to more rigorously analyse the attendance patterns of specific groups of pupils, alongside the effective work the school is doing with individual families.

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

Yours sincerely

Victoria Griffin
His Majesty's Inspector