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Dear Ms Chantler

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Werneth School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 7 May 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 was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in October 2023.

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's key judgements, but to identify and report on the school's progress. It is to highlight to the school and parents and carers 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 interim chief executive officer (CEO) of the Education Learning Trust, other staff, trustees, members of the academy governing body and the local authority 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, looked at examples of pupils' work, met with pupils and staff and reviewed a range of documentation.

Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to no longer be judged as having serious weaknesses.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Since the previous monitoring visit, there have been substantial changes to stabilise leadership within school and across the trust. For instance, the trust has appointed an interim CEO and the school has appointed two deputy headteachers. There has been some instability with staff.

The school has continued to improve the processes and procedures to support pupils to engage in lessons and behave positively. It has sharpened its behaviour management processes. Pupils and staff have a clearer understanding of the consequences of pupils' behaviour choices than they did in the past. Rewards and sanctions are used with greater consistency and effectiveness. This is helping to improve behaviour across school. Even so, some staff continue to lack the skills and confidence that are needed to manage pupils' behaviour effectively. This impacts on how some pupils interact with staff and participate in their learning.

The school has used external support to evaluate its practices and policies to reduce pupils' absences. With external guidance, the school has set up stronger strategies to help pupils to overcome barriers to attendance. However, the school's work to improve attendance rates has not been maintained since the previous monitoring visit. Sudden changes to staffing and leadership have delayed the work to improve attendance. As a result, overall attendance rates remain low.

The school uses data more rigorously to inform its decision-making. For example, the school reviews trends in behaviour and academic outcomes more effectively than it did in the past. This provides assurances that the school's improvement work is beginning to have the desired impact. Consequently, the school, the trust and local governors are better informed to evaluate and improve policies and practices.

The school is continuing to develop its programme to promote pupils' personal development. It is finalising opportunities for pupils to learn more about fundamental British values to prepare them for life in modern Britain. For example, the school is working with pupil leaders to organise a culture day to celebrate differences. This is beginning to raise pupils' awareness of the importance of understanding and respecting the differences between people. The school has also taken steps to review and strengthen its clubs and wider opportunities. However, some of this work is in its early stages. As a result, pupils do not benefit from a broad range of experiences and opportunities to develop their talents and interests.

Improvements to the leadership structure means that the school has stronger oversight of the curriculum improvement work than it did previously. This has enabled the school to invest in time and resources to address key priority areas across school. For example, through collaboration with experts, the school has made further progress in designing a clear and well-structured curriculum across subjects. This has included visits to other schools to learn from strong practice. However, some of the work to address weaknesses in the delivery of the curriculum has not been fully embedded. This means that variation remains. The school has reshaped how teachers are supported to check pupils' learning, but some teachers are not well equipped to use this information effectively to inform their

teaching. As a result, some pupils continue to have gaps in their learning which limits how well they achieve, including in external examinations.

The school has maintained its work and efforts to support pupils with reading. This is beginning to have a positive impact on how well pupils read and subsequently learn the curriculum. Some pupils develop an increasingly positive attitude to reading. However, some pupils, especially those in key stage 4, do not engage with the additional support as well as they should. This limits them from building confidence and competence in reading.

The work to improve how pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified and supported remains broadly the same as at the time of the last monitoring visit. While staff are better informed of the additional needs of pupils with SEND, some do not have the confidence to apply strategies to adapt teaching effectively. This means that some pupils with SEND do not access the curriculum as securely and effectively as they should.

Trustees and members of the local governing body are increasingly reviewing how to shape their work to raise standards across school. They ensure that improvement work is well-considered, sensible and purposeful. The school and local governors understand the importance of engaging positively with staff and parents. They have set up staff consultation working groups and parent information evenings to help establish stronger engagement with stakeholders. This is leading to growing confidence among staff and parents in the school's ability to tackle weaknesses.

Since the previous monitoring visit, the school and the trust have secured further support from the local authority and an external trust. Through this additional support, the school has worked more effectively to renew its practices. In addition, the school has strengthened its checks on provision to ensure that it is better informed about the shortcomings that need addressing. This is helping the school to reshape and strengthen the staff training programme.

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

Yours sincerely

Amina Modan
His Majesty's Inspector