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Dear Mr Taylor

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Buttershaw Business & Enterprise College Academy

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 9 July 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in February 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 and other senior leaders, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust, the director for secondary education of the trust and trustees 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 spoke with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with groups of pupils, scrutinised behaviour and attendance records, and considered the school's work to safeguard pupils. 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

Since my last visit, the school has continued to make adjustments to the roles and responsibilities of staff. There have been new appointments in science and in design and technology. The school has recruited to fill a number of other vacancies for the new academic year. Despite this, there remain vacancies in some subjects that have not been filled for September 2024. Some senior leaders in the school have also changed their areas of responsibility to better respond to the needs of the school. During this visit, I primarily focused on actions to improve pupils' behaviour and attendance as well as the quality of education that they receive.

The school has reviewed the content of the curriculum in each subject. Subjects are at different stages in this process. Some, such as mathematics, are further along. Others continue to make further refinements. Subject curriculums are now more clearly set out. Leaders have ensured that these revised curriculums cover the expectations of the national curriculum. Improved curriculum documentation provides teachers with greater clarity about what content needs to be taught and when. As a result, pupils learn important knowledge in a more logical sequence.

Leaders recognise that there remains significant variation in how effectively the curriculum is taught. The school provides staff with research-informed training to address this. Some training includes support from external experts who leaders have commissioned to work with the school or individual departments. In some lessons, the impact of this training is becoming increasingly evident. For example, teachers use agreed strategies to check pupils' understanding or to revisit prior knowledge at the beginning of lessons. However, these are not used in a way that leads to improved learning for pupils consistently. Some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and of their conduct remain too low.

My last visit focused on actions to improve the behaviour of pupils. This remains an ongoing priority for the school. Sanctions, such as suspensions for poor behaviour, remain too high. However, there are early indications of improvement. In recent terms, there has been a reduction in the number of suspensions issued. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes in lessons, while not consistently meeting leaders' expectations, provide a climate where learning can happen without significant disruption. This was reflected in my visits to lessons and in the views of pupils I spoke with. Pupils explained to me that they perceive behaviour in school to be improving.

Rates of absence continue to be higher than other schools locally and nationally. However, the attendance of pupils is showing improvement. The reductions in the number of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent, and pupils who are late to school, are particularly positive. You realise that this is an important first step to pupils receiving a strong education. The school, and trust, has invested in additional staffing capacity to build on these improvements. It is important that this work continues and that fewer pupils regularly miss school.

The trust, including those with responsibility for governance, has an accurate understanding of the school's current position. It makes suitable checks to assure itself that necessary improvements, such as in attendance and curriculum design, are being realised. It supplements its understanding by engaging external experts to provide further support and scrutiny of its work. Consequently, leaders know where further improvements are still needed and take steps to bring these about.

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

Yours sincerely

Thomas Wraith
His Majesty's Inspector