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Todd Baines
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Dear Mr Baines

Monitoring inspection of a school not in a category of concern of Pinewood School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 18 December 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 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 and other senior leaders, governors and a representative of 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 made visits to lessons, reviewed a range of documents and held discussions with pupils and a range of other staff. 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.

Main findings

The school has been through a turbulent time since the last graded inspection in October 2023. The previous headteacher left the school in December 2023. Several other staff have also left the school. Since January 2024, an acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have led the school. Pupils are currently taught in relocatable classrooms while a new school is being built on the same site. There has been considerable work undertaken by leaders and staff to manage the smooth transition to these temporary buildings. Despite these challenges, leaders have made progress to improve the school. The turbulence has settled. The school is now well placed to continue in the next phase of its improvement journey. A newly appointed substantive headteacher starts work in January 2025.

The quality of the school's curriculum has significantly improved. The redesigned curriculum now sets out the knowledge pupils need to know and remember. This provides greater clarity for teachers. There is a shared understanding of how subjects will be taught. Pupils benefit from a greater connectivity across the curriculum. They are now more able to make links between what they already know and the new knowledge that they are learning. In some subjects, there remains work to do to ensure the curriculum is well designed and is for the entire academic year. There is a clear timescale for the completion of this work.

Teachers have received much training to strengthen their understanding of how to teach the curriculum. This is paying dividends. In many subjects, teachers are skilled at presenting information clearly. They have secure knowledge of the subjects that they teach. They design activities that help pupils to learn the curriculum increasingly well. Some staff still require additional support and training to help them to refine and sharpen their practice. Sometimes, staff do not deliver the school's curriculum well. This variability means that some pupils do not experience the high-quality provision that they should.

There is now a well-understood phonics programme in place. Staff have received training in how to best deliver the programme to pupils. Pupils read books that are now more closely matched to their phonics knowledge. This provides opportunities for pupils to apply and practise the new letter sounds that they are learning. Despite this, there remains more to do to ensure that all staff have the depth of knowledge they need to teach pupils to read well. Some staff, for example, do not pronounce letter sounds accurately. Some others do not use the agreed terminology set out in the phonics programme. This can be confusing for pupils.

The governing body maintains a clear strategic oversight of the work of the school. Governors work together well to provide significant challenge to and support for the school's acting leaders. School leaders are providing much-needed stability to the school. With determination and gusto, they have set about tackling the most pressing issues faced by the school. While there remains more to do, leaders are increasingly taking the right actions, in the right order and at the right time. As a result, the quality of the school's work is on the up. The school is well placed to continue to provide pupils with a

better quality of education. Leaders have made wise use of the advice and support provided to them by the local authority and by leaders from other schools. This has helped the school to hone its support for staff more closely during the past year.

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

Yours sincerely

Nathan Lowe
His Majesty's Inspector