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Tristan Muller-Forster
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Dear Mr Muller-Forster

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Tavistock College

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 17 March 2023, 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 May 2022.

During the inspection, I discussed with you, other senior leaders and the CEO of the multi-academy trust 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 school's work, scrutinised documents and met with groups of pupils. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Tavistock College remains inadequate and has serious weaknesses. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the category of concern to be removed.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

This was the first monitoring visit since the school's section 5 inspection in May 2022. Since the inspection, a vice-principal overseeing behaviour and inclusion, a director of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), an assistant principal for teaching and learning and an assistant principal for disadvantaged pupils, science, technology and mathematics have been appointed. The focus of the monitoring inspection was to

evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in place at the school and leaders' management of behaviour.

The changes that leaders have introduced to the school's safeguarding arrangements ensure that most pupils feel safe at school. For example, leaders have changed the lunchtime arrangements, which has reduced the number of pupils accessing the outdoor space at one time. As a result, there is significantly less unruly behaviour, and most pupils feel protected. There is a calm and orderly environment around the school at lunchtime. Leaders meet regularly to scrutinise the impact of support on pupils identified as being at risk of harm.

Leaders have revised the personal, social and health education curriculum to support pupils to be well prepared for the world beyond school. Leaders have also ensured that teachers have strong and up-to-date knowledge about this programme. Consequently, pupils articulate their knowledge confidently about a breadth of topics, such as the importance of tolerance and understanding of other cultures and faiths. Leaders have particularly placed a focus on misogyny and gender-based violence. Pupils state that the curriculum is helping to build a culture where pupils with protected characteristics are safe and supported. However, this is not yet fully embedded.

Pupils state that bullying is an issue for some but that, when it is reported, it is dealt with effectively. Leaders have oversight of bullying incidents and address issues as they arise. Overwhelmingly, pupils state that there are trusted adults in the school with whom they can share their concerns. However, some pupils still do not report issues about bullying, fearing that it may worsen the situation. Leaders are establishing ways for pupils to report their concerns anonymously, but many pupils cannot access these during school hours. Student leaders have raised this issue and are working with senior leaders to resolve it.

Leaders have revised their approaches to managing pupils' behaviour and conduct. They track pupils' behaviour closely and provide bespoke support for pupils who need it. All staff and pupils have received training to ensure consistent expectations regarding acceptable behaviour, both in and beyond the classroom. Pupils state that behaviour is getting better around the school, but some issues remain. Pupils, in all year groups, state that behaviour in lessons has improved due to the actions leaders have taken to improve the quality of the curriculum and to teaching. The increased profile of pupils with SEND when considering curriculum planning has also supported improvements to behaviour in lessons. However, disadvantaged boys with SEND are still disproportionately represented in suspensions and internal isolation.

Leaders are ambitious for the academic, social and emotional well-being of pupils. Their school improvement planning makes clear how the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report are to be addressed. Leaders have commissioned external validation to evaluate the impact of their improvement strategies.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of the Dartmoor multi-academy trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Devon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Susan Aykin
His Majesty's Inspector