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Dear Mrs Robinson

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Sir William Stanier School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 8 July 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in November 2024.

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 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, trust leaders, the chair of the accelerated improvement board, staff and representatives of the local authority the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. I also met with some pupils, carried out lesson visits, reviewed samples of pupils' work and reviewed a range of documentation. 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 no longer be judged as having serious weaknesses.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Two deputy headteachers have joined the school in recent months.

The school has faced some challenges since the previous inspection. In particular, the school has had to contend with barriers linked to financial constraints, leadership changes and the entrenched low expectations of pupils' achievement from some in the community. The school's historic turbulence in leadership had created some distrust and frustration from staff. The school has prioritised rebuilding the relationship between staff, school and trust leaders. Although this work is ongoing, many staff are increasingly supportive of the actions that the school is taking to bring about improvement.

Work to develop the quality of teaching is in its early stages. It has been impeded by the time taken to appoint a senior leader with responsibility for this area. As a result, weaknesses in curriculum delivery and assessment that were identified at the last inspection remain. That said, the school has thought carefully about how to make improvements to the quality of teaching sustainable. A well-considered programme of staff training and development is now in place. The school's first step has been to ensure that staff embed agreed lesson routines. This is beginning to bear fruit. For example, it is now the norm for staff to greet pupils at their classroom door at the start of lessons. This helps to settle pupils and prepare them for learning.

The school has adopted an evidence-informed approach to lesson design which includes suitable strategies that promote learning. A small number of staff are beginning to incorporate these strategies into their practice, with some success. However, this is not the case elsewhere, which means that some pupils do not benefit from these recent changes.

The school's approach to supporting pupils to read well has improved markedly since the last inspection. Reading remains a barrier to learning for many pupils. The school now has an accurate understanding of who these pupils are and which aspects of reading they need help with. The school has already identified any reading difficulties for those pupils who are due to join Year 7 in September 2025 so that they can receive help as soon as they arrive.

Staff have been trained appropriately to deliver a range of additional support to help those pupils who find reading difficult. This support has made a real difference to some pupils, although the high number of pupils who need help with their reading remains a challenge for the school. With this in mind, the school has designed a universal offer, including a reading curriculum for pupils in key stage 3. Staff have also been guided on how to support pupils with reading across the curriculum. For example, there is now a consistent approach to introducing new vocabulary. Pupils are beginning to benefit from the school's actions to help them to read fluently.

With support from the trust, the school has taken a phased approach to strengthening its provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The first step has been a review of the school's processes for identifying any additional needs that pupils may have. Staff are now more involved with this process. However, gaps remain in staff's knowledge. Consequently, some pupils' needs are not as well understood or as accurately identified as they should be. The school has reviewed the information that is

shared with staff about any additional needs that pupils have. As a result, changes are being made so that this information is more specific to individual pupils and provides clarity about the strategies that staff should use to help them. Some teachers are honing their practice in adapting teaching to meet pupils' specific needs. However, this approach is not typical for all pupils with SEND.

The school has placed considerable emphasis on developing a more positive environment for learning. Staff and pupils have greater clarity about the school's expectations of pupils' conduct and the consequences for failing to meet these expectations. Recently, the number of suspensions for unacceptable behaviour has rapidly reduced. Classrooms are calmer than they have been in the past, with less disruption to learning. Pupils and staff alike commented favourably on the improved behaviour in lessons and around the school site. Pupils also noted that relationships with staff are becoming more positive, and some pupils said that this makes them feel more welcome in school. However, inconsistency remains in how the behaviour policy is applied by staff. The number of pupils who spend time in the school's internal exclusion room, while reducing, remains high. Some pupils continue to display negative or apathetic attitudes towards their learning. Some pupils are not respectful to staff.

Attendance is one of the school's biggest challenges. With support from the trust, the school has implemented a new attendance strategy. The processes and systems that have been established have helped the school to more accurately and usefully review trends in pupils' attendance. This has had some success in raising the attendance of some pupils. Even so, overall attendance rates remain lower than the national average. This has been exacerbated by the high number of suspensions.

The school has taken appropriate action to ensure that pupils have had adequate opportunities to learn about world faiths and cultures this year. In addition, the school has designed a well-considered programme to support pupils' personal development so that they are better prepared for life in modern Britain. This will be implemented in September 2025.

Following the previous inspection, the trust identified where additional capacity was needed and provided appropriate support. This has helped to strengthen aspects of the school's provision. For example, leaders from other schools within the trust have helped to review and improve the school's approach to identifying the needs of pupils with SEND. In addition, the trust established an accelerated improvement board. Careful thought was given to ensuring that the people appointed to this group have the relevant expertise and skills to enable them to challenge and support the school with rigour and empathy.

The accelerated improvement board has strong oversight of the support provided to the school and the progress that it is making against the improvement plan. This is shared with, and closely reviewed by, the trust and the local governing body. Those responsible for governance and school leaders share an accurate understanding of the extent of the challenges that the school faces to overcome historical weaknesses. As such, there is a realistic and measured approach to bringing about positive and sustained change.

Prior to the previous inspection, the trust had proactively sought additional support from another local trust. The school has made effective use of this external scrutiny and expertise, for example when reviewing and strengthening the school's systems for managing pupils' behaviour.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of The Learning Partnership Academies Trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Cheshire East. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Sally Rix
His Majesty's Inspector