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Dear Mr Sanders

Special measures monitoring inspection of Grafham Grange School

Following my visit to your school on 21 January 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 2015. This monitoring inspection took place at the same time as an unannounced monitoring inspection of the residential provision. The findings from the inspection of the residential provision are incorporated into this special measures monitoring inspection report.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers (NQTs) before the next monitoring inspection.

The school has not met four of the national minimum standards for residential special schools. These are listed at the end of this report. All other standards are met.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Surrey. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Janet Pearce
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2015

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement by ensuring that:
 - teachers raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - teachers can access opportunities to learn from best practice from within the school and elsewhere
 - teachers' development needs are identified properly so that bespoke training helps them to improve their practice
 - teachers learn how to incorporate pupils' health and education plans effectively into their planning.
- Improve pupils' behaviour by ensuring that:
 - the behaviour management policy is re-visited and adjusted to reflect an appropriate emphasis on the role of teachers and other adults in helping pupils to learn
 - strategies are developed to support and encourage better attendance and reduce the need for exclusion and other sanctions.
- Improve the quality and impact of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - fragile, temporary or short-term leadership roles are immediately addressed and leadership accountabilities are known to all
 - the day-to-day running of the school is identified and made clear to all
 - an external review of governance is undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved
 - safeguarding and child protection procedures are fully reviewed and all shortcomings identified within this inspection are rectified.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 21 January 2016

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, headteacher, teachers, coordinator for special educational needs, speech and language therapist and a group of governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body and the chief executive of the Radius Trust. Her Majesty's Inspector also met with a small group of pupils. The social care inspector visited the residential provision in the evening and spoke to all pupils. She also met with the head of care and other members of staff, scrutinised documents and checked whether the school had met all the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Context

Since the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed, the acting head of care has been appointed to the substantive post and the governing body has been restructured with new members. A number of other staff changes have taken place.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupils are now making more progress with their learning since the previous inspection in May 2015, because teaching is improving, behaviour is better and the school is a calmer and more secure place. Pupils' English and mathematics books contain neatly presented work that shows evidence of progression from their starting points. Pupils told inspectors that lessons were more structured and that they were learning more.

School leaders have begun to collect relevant information about pupils' abilities and levels of need. Teachers are making better use of the information provided by the special educational needs coordinator and therapy staff to plan activities that are set at the right level in order to assure faster progress. Helpful 'personal learning plans' outline pupils' starting points, areas of difficulty and how best to support them.

However, it is early days. The school's focus has rightly been on securing safety and better behaviour, restoring relationships and confidence in leadership. Systems are in place to monitor how well pupils are doing, but it is too soon to say whether progress is rapidly accelerating.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching is improving. Pupils respond positively to the feedback they are given and what their teachers write in their books. A Year 11 pupil told inspectors that he was pleased to be given revision homework and that his progress was now being taken seriously.

Relationships between pupils and staff have improved. Pupils seen during the inspection were clearly keen to learn. They have been grouped more carefully into 'pods', taking into account their age and ability. As a result, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have been raised. Pupils' only disappointment is that they do not currently have any science teachers. Science lessons take place via an online e-learning package. While this package provides pupils with some interaction and useful scientific facts, it is not responsive to their needs, and does not support those who need to catch up. Pupils had mixed views about this programme: a few welcomed that it was individual and relatively calming, but others found some aspects of the programme distracting and had found ways to avoid fully concentrating. School leaders are rightly reducing the amount of time pupils spend on e-learning activities.

Pupils in the school make most progress when there is a clear end-point or product to their learning, such as in art. In this way, they acquire immediate gratification for their efforts and on-the-spot feedback from staff and each other for their work. During the inspection, pupils were creating appealing wax-resist designs that demonstrated growing artistry and commitment. Similar short-term rewards for learning were observed in physical education, where carefully planned questions helped to consolidate facts and understanding.

Teachers are beginning to learn from each other and benefit from the experience of others across the school. They have had some useful feedback from senior leaders about how to improve their work. However, not enough has been done to ensure that all teachers know exactly what good and better progress looks like or that they share good practice systematically.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' behaviour has settled after a period of turbulence and instability. Pupils are calmly occupied in lessons and supervised in a friendly and orderly manner when moving around the site, in the lunch hall, playing games at breaktimes and in the residential provision.

Cases of physical restraint and intervention are much reduced, with very few incidents recorded since September 2015. The room previously used for isolation has been closed. The school's new 'no exclusion' policy has been adhered to, which is encouraging. Incidents of poor behaviour or extreme anxiety are being quickly de-escalated and defused, so that order can be quickly restored. Risk assessments, particularly for those pupils in the residential provision, have improved in quality since the last inspection and are detailed and easily accessible to all staff.

Pupils are generally polite and happy. They greeted inspectors in a friendly and courteous way when they visited lessons or the residential homes and were keen to show off their work. Inspectors heard very little inappropriate or derogatory language. Pupils get along, cooperate and understand each other well. Most pupils who spoke to the inspectors said that there was no bullying now and newer pupils spoke of being welcomed and made to feel comfortable by leaders and teachers.

A newly developed reward system encourages pupils to try hard and behave well. They appreciate the points they earn and how these convert into treats and prizes. Over time, the rewards system provides pupils with not only short-term gratification, but also resilience and a sense of intrinsic motivation to succeed.

Attendance is close to national figures for mainstream schools, and for those pupils who find regular attendance more difficult, there are convincing case studies, demonstrating what the school has done to ensure better attendance. Pupils mostly enjoy coming to school. One pupil told an inspector, 'At weekends, I am excited about coming back to school – I love it'.

A newly implemented life skills programme has been devised and is in use across all year groups in the residential provision. It enables pupils to develop new skills for adulthood including cooking, household chores and money management. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 work through the programme at a steady pace, with oversight from a senior member of staff. Those pupils who struggle are supported to develop their skills before moving on. The inspector saw pupils in the residential area cooking and

preparing meals for the whole group, as well as washing up, without needing to be asked. One pupil was keen to show the recipes they had collated, while another showed the menu planners. Some pupils had been shopping for the ingredients of the group's chosen meal. All known allergies and intolerances are clearly displayed in the kitchen area, so pupils and staff can alter meals for this. Pupils appeared happy to be involved in this process, and did not deem it as 'work'.

Food provided within the school is now much improved. The dining area is more conducive to social learning. When dining in the residential area, pupils are choosing and making evening meals, which they say they much prefer. Menus are clear and show pupils' input and choice. Dietary needs are displayed in the main kitchen and the cook makes separate meals for those who have allergies. Ingredients are available in the residential area and all staff are aware of food intolerances, as well as likes and dislikes.

Since the last inspection, a school nurse has been appointed. This has provided a level of professional oversight and improved information about pupils' health needs. However, information about how to respond to known medical conditions is not detailed enough. Health and treatment plans have been created with parents and have not been formally endorsed by a medical professional such as a paediatrician, consultant or even the school nurse. Therefore the national minimum standard for this aspect is not met.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Current senior leaders have stabilised the school, established more secure safeguarding procedures and raised morale. Staff and pupils now feel more valued: teachers and staff are now in a better position to focus on pupils' learning and personal development. The roles and responsibilities of the headteacher and executive headteacher are well defined. Staff are clear about who is responsible for the running of the school and working relationships. Additional layers of leadership and management have developed for the good of pupils, including those staff leading on behaviour management and teaching and learning. Now that the acting head of care has been appointed in a permanent capacity, residential staff have a clearer understanding of their roles and responsibilities and are able to look forward more positively to the future of the school.

The Trust's statement of action and the school improvement plan are now fit for purpose. Leaders have responded to the comments from Her Majesty's Inspector and made amendments to the plans, including ensuring that they link more closely to the areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection. However, plans to improve the school do not include enough that is measurable, particularly in the light of some of the new leadership roles, which need to be evaluated more sharply by their impact on pupils' outcomes.

In line with requirements, a comprehensive statement of purpose has been devised, detailing the aims and ethos of the school. The role of the residential provision is highlighted, including how this makes an impact on outcomes for pupils. Staff are aware of the content of the statement and a copy is available to view on the school website.

The arrangements for safeguarding pupils have been reviewed and completely overhauled. The designated safeguarding lead now holds this post as her sole responsibility and sits on the senior leadership team. The designated safeguarding leader has had a major impact on improving recording and filing of safeguarding concerns, including individual files for all pupils. Record-keeping now provides a clear chronology of concerns and the necessary detail to minimise risk.

All staff have had up-to-date safeguarding training delivered by a well-regarded charity organisation, complemented by online workshops. Staff training has included useful sessions on protecting pupils from risk of sexual exploitation and radicalisation. Statutory safer recruitment checks on all staff have now been carried out and the records of all staff employed in the school are now in order and meet current requirements. However, it is too early to evaluate the full impact of the improved training and safeguarding procedures. While leaders have made great strides to assure that safeguarding procedures are now effective in the school, there is limited evidence to demonstrate that governors have sufficient experience or expertise to provide the necessary challenge or support, particularly with regard to scrutiny of serious incidents or allegations against members of staff. As a result, the relevant national minimum standard has not yet been met.

However, in line with the requirements of the national minimum standards, the appointment of an independent visitor has provided better scrutiny of the school's safeguarding procedures. She has made two visits to the school, in the summer and autumn terms. Pupils know who the independent visitor is and have been able to make contact with her. School leaders have responded to the independent visitor's comments, although actions taken are not as prompt or thorough as they could be.

Staff working in the residential settings have benefited from better training to fit them for their roles. Those who do not hold a Level 3 qualification are now working towards one. However, leaders have not ensured that all relevant staff have completed their training and acquire the necessary qualifications within appropriate time limits.

School leaders and staff now take a more rounded and therapeutic approach to pupils' difficulties, rather than resorting to punitive measures. Staff attending weekly multidisciplinary meetings identify those pupils in greatest need and plan extra support accordingly. However, it is early days and evidence from the inspection indicates that multidisciplinary meetings tend to concentrate more on pupils with challenging behaviour rather than focusing equally on those pupils who may be

provoking reactions or becoming withdrawn. Inspectors were concerned that not all pupils' physical, emotional and social development needs were being promoted equally well, so, as a result, the relevant national minimum standard is not met.

Leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning is not sharp enough. Observations of lessons and shorter visits to observe teaching have taken place and staff welcome senior leaders' advice and guidance. The senior leader for teaching and learning has put together a better system to assess pupils on entry and then track their progress carefully. However, records of observations of teaching are superficial and focus too much on pupils' behaviour, rather than the quality of learning taking place. In addition, not enough has been done to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including their understanding of British values and the world around them.

Complaints made since the last inspection have been investigated thoroughly. Pupils are aware of the complaints process because there is helpful information about how to complain displayed prominently around the school and residential areas. All requirements related to the management of complaints are now met.

The governing body now has new members who have more experience of education. A full review of governance is scheduled to take place before the next monitoring inspection. However, some aspects of governance remain underdeveloped, particularly how the governors carry out their duties to audit and monitor safeguarding and challenge senior leaders in the school.

External support

School leaders and the Trust have commissioned external support from a national leader of education and a school improvement adviser, who regularly visit the school to provide objective guidance and some challenge. The governing body has also commissioned a national leader of governance to aid them with the review of their work. A children's safeguarding charity has audited the safeguarding work of the school and provided essential moral support and practical encouragement for those staff leading on safety.

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools:

- children's physical, emotional and social development needs are promoted. (NMS 3.1)
- where necessary, a child has a clear individual health and welfare plan or similar record, containing relevant health and welfare information provided by parents /carers, and recording significant health and welfare needs and issues. (NMS 3.12)
- the school ensures that:

- arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at the school
- such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (NMS 11.1)
- the school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met (NMS 13.4)