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Mr M Sanders  
Grafham Grange School  
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Surrey  
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Dear Mr Sanders

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Grafham Grange School**

Following my visit to your school on 22 June 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 that have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in May 2015. The full list of the areas for improvement that were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

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 school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner 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 that 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 second monitoring inspection on 22 June 2016**

### **Evidence**

Her Majesty's Inspector observed the school's work, visited lessons, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, pupils, senior leaders, staff and two members of the governing body.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the executive headteacher and the chief executive officer have left the school and the Radius Trust. The assistant headteacher has left the school. A science teacher has been appointed to work for four days a week. An inspection of the boarding provision in the school took place at the same time as the monitoring inspection, the findings of which will be published in a separate report.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Leadership is stronger and more streamlined since the previous monitoring inspection. The headteacher is clearly the leader of the school and staff appreciate his care of the pupils and commitment to their progress. Other leaders have developed their roles since the last inspection. For example, the safeguarding lead is firmly part of the senior leadership team and is accountable for improving behaviour, attendance and overall welfare and for the prevention of bullying. As a result, there is a more coherent and balanced approach to developing pupils' self-esteem and personal skills.

The senior leader for progress, teaching and learning has also developed her role and is beginning to make more impact on the overall quality of teaching across the school. She has begun work on a comprehensive monitoring plan to review and improve teaching. She has carried out some helpful observations with the school improvement partner and the headteacher. The school's plans to review and improve teaching are appropriate and include a focus not just on what teachers do, but how well pupils learn and progress. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this work yet. However, school leaders know that routine monitoring of teaching needs to be more systematic and focused on exactly what will guarantee better progress for all pupils.

Staff morale is buoyant. They value being treated as professionals, have more creative energy and drive and are feeling positive about the future. Following the previous monitoring inspection, teachers and non-teaching staff work together even more supportively, frequently sharing good ideas for lessons and managing pupils' behaviour. They do not work in isolation, but talk about their teaching and different approaches with hope and optimism.

Improvements have also been made to the range of subjects on offer to the pupils. The appointment of a science teacher means that pupils now benefit from specialist science lessons rather than working through the mediocre online learning packages provided at the time of the previous monitoring inspection.

Improvements to the curriculum still do not include enough focus on promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is encouraging that the school is working closely within the 'Prevent' duty and helping to protect pupils from the risks of radicalisation and extremist views. In addition, the introduction of a pupil parliament is a key occasion for pupils to become involved and influence decision making. However, these opportunities are not enough in themselves to develop the pupils as rounded, secure and skilled. There is insufficient emphasis on encouraging pupils to look outside themselves in order to be well prepared for the wider world, career choices and their next steps.

School leaders have built upon the improvements made at the previous monitoring visit to assure pupils' safety. Risk assessments are thorough and used effectively to protect pupils from risk of harm. Relationships are strengthening between the school and other agencies working with children. Gradually, confidence in the school is beginning to be restored.

While school leaders and staff are taking effective action to improve the school towards coming out of special measures, the same cannot be said of leadership at the level of governance and the trust. The strategic leadership, vision and roles and responsibilities of governors and trust members are still not clear. The review of governance, as recommended at the section 5 inspection in May 2015, has still not taken place, in spite of assurances given to Her Majesty's Inspector that this would be carried out shortly after the previous monitoring inspection. Some changes of personnel have slowed momentum. The chief executive has left the trust. The previous executive headteacher occupied the post of chief executive for an interim period before leaving. The post of chief executive is currently vacant and there do not appear to be firm plans to fill it.

There are some newly recruited trust members and governors who individually are doing a good job of monitoring and challenging the school. These governors and members of the trust know the school well, and are visiting more often and providing better support and challenge for staff and leaders. The leader responsible for safeguarding, welfare and behaviour is adamant that she is firmly held to account by particular governors and trust members. The headteacher and other school leaders value the regular meetings with governors and members of the trust because they are challenged about the progress that the school is making.

Nevertheless, it is simply not good enough that governors and the trust have not reviewed their own effectiveness with the same level of scrutiny as they have monitored the school. Although the school itself is steadily improving through the efforts of staff and school leaders, weaknesses in the trust and governance linger,

which will not support the school in the long run. A review is therefore urgently required, as this failing is putting the school's future improvement at risk.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Teaching continues to improve. Teachers have raised their expectations of what pupils can accomplish in a lesson and therefore push them to be more thoughtful and productive. Planning for lessons takes much more account of pupils' particular difficulties, anxieties and gaps in their learning. Teachers typically explain concepts and tasks well; they patiently repeat key ideas and maintain a lively questioning and answering approach to keep the pupils interested. Warmth and humour permeate the lessons, but not at the expense of keeping pupils concentrating. Bad habits of interrupting are staved off firmly and courteous attention is encouraged.

Increasingly, teachers are making good use of pupils' personal learning plans, which were introduced at the time of the last monitoring inspection. Pupils are now more involved in setting and discussing their own targets, which has been a big step forward.

Pupils are eager to 'get it right'. They ask questions and are keen to acquire knowledge and do well. Understandably, they sometimes lose heart because they are conscious of gaps in their knowledge and their own learning difficulties. They are inclined to be hard on themselves and are quick to dismiss their own efforts, but staff do not give up and, encouragingly, nor do pupils. With patience and breezy determination, staff are very skilled at overcoming what appears to be pupils' diffidence and they push them on to achieve more. Pupils sustain their concentration well and persist with challenging tasks, even when they are not enjoying them or finding them easy. As a result, they make progress. This is particularly a strength in art and physical education, although levels of increased challenge are also evident in mathematics and English.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

The school is currently a happy and orderly place. Pupils generally conduct themselves calmly around the site and appreciate what the staff do for them. There is a greater sense of pride and loyalty discernible around the school. For example, during the inspection, pupils were palpably nervous and wanting to show themselves at their best, which sometimes made them anxious. However, they were seen to be notably polite and respectful, not only to Her Majesty's Inspector, but also to all staff.

Pupils feel safe and secure on the site. Since the time of the section 5 inspection and the previous monitoring inspection, instances of exclusion and physical intervention have continued to decline and are considerably lower than those recorded at the same time last year. Physical intervention is rarely needed. When there are incidents requiring the use of physical restraint as a last resort,

comprehensive notes are recorded, including details of full debriefs and lessons learned.

Attendance is improving and for most pupils compares well with that of attendance in mainstream schools. For those pupils who find good attendance difficult, there are signs of improvements and detailed accounts are kept of the work the school is doing with individual pupils and their families.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Pupils are making more progress than they were at the previous monitoring inspection. However, their overall attainment is well below that of pupils with similar starting points because there are gaps in their learning. A legacy of weak teaching and poor curriculum planning has had a negative impact on pupils' overall achievement that is taking time to put right. Nevertheless, pupils are catching up. Predictions for the current Year 11 GCSE results are cautious. The headteacher is understandably disappointed that there has not been sufficient time to make up for lost momentum with this group. However, Year 11 pupils attended all their examinations, which was an improvement in itself.

The progress of current pupils is speeding up as the teaching improves and as more account is taken of exactly what pupils know, understand and can do. Teaching is more sensitive to some pupils' difficulties with their working memory and ability to retain information. Teachers rightly allow more time for pupils to learn and repeat activities until they gain more confidence.

### **External support**

The school has continued to make use of a school improvement adviser who visits regularly to observe teaching and provide guidance. She has worked closely with leaders developing the monitoring cycle and has advised on lesson observations and reviews of pupils' work. However, the school is still too inward looking. Within the school, teachers are sharing their work and learning from each other, but they have not formed links with similar good or outstanding schools to inspire their work and raise their expectations even more. School and trust leaders have not sought any additional support from any of the local authorities who place pupils in the school. This has the potential to place limitations on how much and how rapidly the school can improve.

- A review of governance and the work of the trust should be carried out without delay and certainly before the next monitoring inspection.