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Annabelle Thomas  
Headteacher  
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Dear Annabelle Thomas

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Unified Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 27 and 28 April 2022, 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in January 2022. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. I discussed the ongoing impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in my evaluation.

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

**The school continues to be inadequate. Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.**

**Having considered the evidence, I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers.**

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer or equivalent of the Orchard Hill College Academy

Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Surrey.  
This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Old  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 27 April 2022 and 28 April 2022**

### **Context**

The membership of the leadership team has remained stable since the last monitoring inspection in January 2022. There is no substantive special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), so the trust's regional lead for special educational needs has been supporting the school for three days a week. The chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust has also been working more directly with the school since January.

There have been some changes to the membership of the local governing body. Two governors have stepped down and been replaced.

Most teaching staff hold substantive posts. The school is currently recruiting to replace one teacher who has recently left the school, as well as to fill some teaching and teaching assistant posts currently filled by temporary or agency staff.

### **The progress made towards the removal of special measures**

The senior leadership team continues to take effective action to improve the school. Monitoring systems are becoming embedded and are helping leaders to know what is working and what needs adjusting. Staff are positive about the changes being made. They work well together to improve the school. As a result, the school's ambition for pupils is beginning to be realised. Pupils are starting to manage their behaviour more consistently well. Leaders are strengthening the curriculum.

Improvements to safeguarding have been maintained and further embedded. The single central record of recruitment checks is stored securely. Records of staff training in safeguarding and behaviour are now well organised so that leaders know when any training needs to be updated. The safeguarding team has been increased in size so that cases can be managed even more efficiently. This is working well.

Similarly, the school's systematic approach to managing pupils' attendance continues to improve. Leaders continue to work well with the local authority in order to engage with families and identify further measures that might help pupils to attend school more regularly. Attendance has improved further but still remains too low. Leaders recognise that in the future they need to be clearer about whether or not they can meet pupils' needs before pupils join the school. This will help the school to put in place the right provision to help pupils attend school regularly, right from the start. The school has begun this work with support from the lead SENCo of the trust.

Leaders' management of pupils' behaviour is becoming more embedded and showing signs of working well. All adults receive a significant amount of training in the school's approach. This includes useful support to help staff understand pupils' specific special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Adults' consistent, calm approach and reduced use of restraint are making a difference. Staff feel more confident in managing

pupils' behaviour. Pupils are being taught how to recognise and regulate their own behaviour. As a result of the school's continued efforts, there has been a further reduction in the amount of high-level behaviour incidents in the school. Significantly, although there are still issues such as swearing, pupils are more inclined to listen to staff requests. Pupils appear to be happier and more comfortable in the school environment. Leaders rightly intend to provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills in the wider community. This work has started with the development of a 'life skills' programme. For example, pupils enjoyed their 'wellbeing walk', where they trekked in the countryside and bought their own food to make lunch. There is more work to do to develop this part of the curriculum so that pupils are well prepared for their future lives.

The curriculum in some subjects is further forward than it was at the last monitoring visit. Staff have been trained in how to plan the subjects they teach. Consequently, pupils in some subjects are now experiencing a curriculum that is better sequenced and more purposefully focused on pupils gaining knowledge over time. However, planning in some subjects is further behind, for example in food technology, where there is currently no permanent postholder.

Necessarily, work is ongoing to improve the quality of the implementation of the curriculum. Training in meeting pupils' SEND needs through appropriate teaching approaches is helping to create a more purposeful atmosphere around the school. Leaders' monitoring allows them to identify where teachers need specific help to improve their practice. Staff appreciate the help they get from both whole-school training and more personalised sessions.

Leaders have begun to improve the reading curriculum. Leaders have devised a plan that is helping them to focus on some aspects of what needs to improve. For example, they have researched, purchased and started to train staff in a new reading programme. This programme aims to improve pupils' vocabulary and increase their comprehension. Various initiatives to promote reading are in their early stages of implementation, but leaders' monitoring shows that these are starting to work as pupils are more willing to read than in the past. However, leaders' work to unpick which pupils have gaps in decoding and which need more help with developing their fluency is not far enough advanced. While a very few pupils now receive some targeted phonics-based provision, there is not yet a clear enough approach to make sure that all pupils who are behind in their reading get the precise, regular help they need to catch up quickly.

The headteacher's ambition that pupils who leave the school at the end of Year 11 will have gained useful qualifications that will support their next stages is starting to become a reality. A wider range of pupils than in the past are being entered for a number of GCSE level qualifications this year. Younger pupils are also taking some entry level and functional skills qualifications as part of a plan to build pupils' confidence and give them a sense of purpose and achievement.

Leaders have made progress in preparing pupils for their future lives. There is now a clear strategy in place to ensure that pupils are able to sustain the next stage of their

education, training or employment. All Year 11 pupils and several younger ones have received independent careers advice. Careers lessons raise pupils' awareness of the choices they have and what is expected of them when applying for their next stage. Leaders have liaised carefully with the local authority and local colleges to ensure that pupils' SEND needs can be met as they transition to college. Importantly, this work is being well managed. Far more pupils than in previous years have been offered a placement when they leave school. There is a clear ambition for pupils to do work experience, with staff now in place to make this happen.

Leaders have further, embryonic plans to adapt the curriculum to better suit pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. For example, they are trialling grouping younger pupils based on the type of need they have rather than by age. Leaders admit that they have only just started to consider how this will work more widely. They have not yet articulated their plans more clearly.

Governors and trust leaders use the school's development plan and visits to the school to monitor the school's work. However, there are currently several different 'action plans' that are not referenced in the school's overarching plan. This limits governors' ability to fully oversee the changes leaders are making. Plans for improving reading need to focus more sharply on how leaders will help pupils to catch up with gaps in their phonics decoding knowledge and reading fluency skills. Governors advocate well for the school, including by liaising with the local authority, to ensure that the site remains safe.

### **Additional support**

Support from the multi-academy trust is helping the school to sustain the improvements it is making to the quality of education. The headteacher values her membership of the headteachers' forum and the additional help the CEO has provided, for example in establishing a well-thought-out procedure for performance management of staff. Funding for additional roles to support attendance, behaviour, safeguarding and careers is adding to the school's capacity to improve. Importantly, the work of the trust's SENCo is having a positive impact on how the school identifies and supports pupils' SEND needs, in making sure that pupils have access to provision named in their education, health and care plans, and on pupils' transition into and out of the school.

The local authority's support with behaviour and attendance is also valued.

### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, including visiting lessons and seeing how pupils behave in corridors and in the lunch hall. The inspector scrutinised documents and met with a range of leaders about the school's work. This included the headteacher, other senior leaders, the multi-academy trust chief executive officer and governors. The inspector met with a number of staff to discuss the curriculum, staff training and how pupils' behaviour and SEND needs are met. The inspector talked to pupils during lessons

and around the school. She met with two groups of pupils about their experiences in school.