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Julia Patrick
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Dear Mrs Patrick

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Castle Rock School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 22 and 23 November 2022, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require special measures following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in October 2021.

During the inspection, Steven Barnes, Stephen Long, John Morrison and Matthew Sammy, Ofsted Inspectors, and I discussed with you, the associate principal, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, other leaders, staff, trustees and governors 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. We also visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, met with pupils and scrutinised documents related to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). We considered the views of parents and staff through the Ofsted surveys. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

The Castle Rock School remains inadequate and requires special measures. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the category of concern to be removed.

I am of the opinion that the school may appoint early career teachers.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

The school joined the Lionheart Education Trust in September 2022. The trust continues to provide the school with high-quality support to bring about the rapid changes that are

needed. Three new assistant headteachers, a librarian and two vulnerable pupil support workers joined the school in September 2022. A new deputy headteacher will join the school in January 2023. There is a new chair of the local governing board (LGB). The leadership of the school is now more stable.

The school's curriculum is improving. Leaders are setting high expectations of what all pupils can achieve. For example, they have plans to increase the number of pupils who study a language at key stage 4. With effective support from the trust, leaders have ensured that there is an ambitious curriculum in place for each subject. Most subject leaders have thought carefully about what they want pupils to learn and when from Year 7 to Year 13.

In some subjects, teachers present information clearly. They ask questions to check pupils' understanding and identify any gaps or misconceptions in pupils' learning. They adapt their teaching to meet the needs of individual pupils. These improvements are especially clear in English, mathematics and physical education. In other subjects, teachers move on before pupils have secured their understanding of the important knowledge. Many pupils do not learn as well as they should.

The special educational needs coordinator is having a positive impact on the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers have received training on SEND. They are beginning to apply this training to support pupils with SEND more effectively in lessons. Leaders have improved their systems for identifying and meeting pupils' needs. They are reviewing the provision for all pupils with SEND and have plans to complete this review by early 2023.

Leaders have introduced a programme of form-time reading. They have chosen texts carefully to ensure that pupils are exposed to a wide and diverse variety of texts and writers. This complements the new English curriculum well. Leaders have re-opened the library. Leaders have introduced a new reading programme for pupils who need help improving their reading. However, this is new and staff do not yet teach it consistently well.

The new behaviour policy continues to work well. Leaders promote kindness and good character. Teachers focus on rewarding pupils when they do the right thing. In the morning line-ups, teachers celebrate pupils' achievements. Most classrooms are orderly. When pupils disrupt learning, many teachers use the policy consistently. Leaders deal with poor behaviour effectively. Pastoral staff give high-quality support to pupils who need help to improve their behaviour. Leaders have improved the arrangements to support pupils who attend off-site alternative provisions. However, pupils' behaviour around school is not yet consistently good. Some pupils still feel uncomfortable in some areas of the school because of the behaviour and past behaviour of others. This includes the toilets. Leaders know they must continue to manage behaviour consistently in order to restore the confidence of all pupils.

Attendance has improved significantly. Leaders are taking effective action to identify and

support pupils who do not attend school as often as they should. Leaders have ambitious targets for attendance. They plan to launch their 'attendance curriculum' in the new year.

Leaders introduced a new curriculum for personal development and careers from Year 7 to the sixth form. They have thought carefully about how and when pupils will learn about relationships and protected characteristics. Leaders have included opportunities for pupils to discuss and debate important concepts. They have provided training and resources to support teachers with the delivery of the curriculum. Some staff teach it effectively but this is not consistently the case. The curriculum is new and needs more time to become well established.

Leaders have made further improvements to safeguarding arrangements. All staff have received safeguarding training and get regular updates. The new assistant headteacher has introduced new ways of working for the safeguarding team. The positive impact of this is clear. Safeguarding staff maintain clear records. They work with colleagues in the pastoral and SEND teams to provide the right support for pupils. Leaders take effective action when they receive reports of harmful sexual behaviour. They are working with staff to ensure a consistent culture of preventing and responding to such behaviour across the school.

Governance of the school has improved since joining the Lionheart Educational Trust. Members of the LGB value the training and support they have received from the trust. They have detailed knowledge about the work that school leaders are doing, and are yet to do, to improve the school. They use this knowledge to challenge and support leaders.

Leaders have clear plans to continue to provide staff with training and support to address weaknesses in provision. Most staff appreciate the training they have received so far. Leaders consider staff's workload and well-being. Most staff enjoy working at the school and are united with leaders in wanting to improve the school for the pupils and the community.

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

Yours sincerely

Aoife Galletly
His Majesty's Inspector