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Claire Bailey
Interim headteacher
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Dear Ms Bailey

Special measures monitoring inspection of Holgate Meadows School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 23 and 24 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require special measures following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in March 2022.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other senior leaders, some middle and curriculum subject leaders the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. I also met with the chair of the interim executive board (IEB), a safeguarding adviser and a school improvement partner for the local authority, and an external school improvement adviser commissioned by the IEB. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also toured the school, met with some staff and pupils and scrutinised a variety of documents. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Holgate Meadows School remains inadequate and requires special measures. Leaders have made insufficient progress to improve the school.

The school may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Since the last full inspection of Holgate Meadows School in March 2022, two additional assistant headteachers have been appointed. A new designated leader for safeguarding

and inclusion took up post in September 2022. Several new members of staff have joined the school. Some new members have been appointed to the IEB. The school is in the process of joining NEXUS Multi-Academy Trust. This inspection focused on the progress made by the school to improve safeguarding arrangements and the management of pupils' behaviour.

Leaders have prioritised much needed improvements in the management of pupils' behaviour. There are some promising signs that leaders are taking the right steps to help staff to better understand the reasons for pupils' behaviour and how they can help them to regulate their feelings and emotions. Most staff now feel more able to manage pupils' behaviour. They have received pertinent training to support them to deal with some pupils' challenging behaviour fairly and safely. The number of injuries to staff are reducing. However, leaders' actions are not resulting in rapid improvement in pupils' behaviour. Adults' expectations for pupils' behaviour remain inconsistent.

Following the initial inspection, leaders restructured classes so that pupils are now taught in smaller groups with pupils of similar ages. For some classes, this has resulted in calmer behaviour of pupils during lessons. Yet, the behaviour of a significant proportion of pupils in lessons, and around the school, remains poor and disruptive. Leaders have not given staff clear enough guidance about how to challenge different types of unacceptable behaviour so that pupils' behaviour improves rapidly.

Leaders have appointed a new leader for the personal, social, health, relationships and sex education curriculum. The leader has ensured that curriculum planning now incorporates all aspects of the statutory requirements for relationships and sex education. Appropriate links are made with the computing curriculum. Pupils can revisit learning at different points throughout their time in school. The curriculum is planned so that all pupils across the school will learn how to keep themselves safe, including through topics linked to digital safety, sexual harassment and anti-bullying. These positive changes are in the early stages of implementation so have yet to demonstrate impact on pupils' learning.

Leaders recognise that, currently, the needs of some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities cannot be met as well as they should be. Leaders are working with the local authority to utilise alternative provision for some pupils to better engage them in learning and reduce incidents of poor behaviour. Some pupils have begun to attend 'Holgate House' on a part-time basis for the same reasons. This provision was recently opened by the school at a location close to the main school site. Leaders have not yet measured the impact of pupils attending this provision. However, the number of pupils persistently absent from school or with low attendance remains high. Leaders and the local authority have been slow to identify what precise and sustainable actions need to be taken to ensure that all pupils' needs are met well. Too many pupils are missing out on education as a result.

The interim headteacher has an ambitious vision for the school and is supported well by the IEB. The IEB have assisted her in her efforts to recruit new staff so that pupils are better supported in improving their unacceptable behaviour and in their learning. The IEB

have also increased the capacity in the senior leadership of the school to support the interim headteacher. Leaders have made some improvements to the school environment, but there is still a long way to go. Most staff feel happier working at the school than at the time of the last inspection. They recognise the hard work and determination of senior leaders to improve the school. Leaders have ensured that staff are valued and appreciated. Together, leaders and staff understand the challenges of the improvements needed to meet the complex needs of pupils well. However, the current school development plan is not fit for purpose. Actions identified in the plan are not precise or timely enough to drive and sustain the necessary improvements.

Leaders have strengthened safeguarding arrangements. The local authority safeguarding improvement adviser has supported leaders to train staff to understand their responsibilities. Leaders hold weekly safeguarding briefings for staff to share information and raise awareness of vulnerable pupils. There are regular updates on relevant local and national safeguarding issues. Staff are now more aware of the potential risks for pupils and the actions they should take if they have a concern about a pupil's welfare.

Leaders have improved capacity within the safeguarding team. The new designated safeguarding and inclusion leader ensures that the members of the safeguarding team carry out their roles competently. Records for safeguarding are detailed. Leaders work actively with external agencies to get pupils and their families the help and advice they need. However, there remain significant concerns about the safety of pupils. For example, leaders have taken some appropriate actions to reduce the number of pupils who abscond, but some pupils still leave the school site without permission on a regular basis. This puts them at risk of harm. Leaders have not done enough to stop this ongoing risk. Some pupils remain concerned about their safety because of the poor behaviour of other pupils. Some parents are not yet convinced that staff can manage pupils' behaviour effectively.

The IEB has recently brokered valuable support for school improvement and leadership through a school improvement company commissioned by the local authority. This support is sensibly targeted to support leaders to refine school improvement planning and to embed sustainable changes to the school to keep pupils safe.

The local authority has provided valuable and ongoing support to improve safeguarding arrangements. However, leaders, including members of the IEB, have struggled to get clear guidance from the local authority for some areas of school improvement. The local authority has not provided school leaders with an initial action plan to support them in the development of school improvement planning. This has contributed to the lack of precision in the school's development plan.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the IEB, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Sheffield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Stephanie Innes-Taylor
His Majesty's Inspector