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Dear Miss Orr

Special measures monitoring inspection of Sir Herbert Leon Academy

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 21 and 22 February 2023, 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 May 2022.

During the inspection, Peter Rodin, Ofsted Inspector (OI), Mike Boddington OI and I discussed with you and other senior leaders and staff, the CEO of the multi-academy trust, other representatives of the trust and two members of the interim standards board (ISB), 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 some lessons, tutor time and an assembly, and met with groups of pupils. We visited an alternative provision used by the school. We scrutinised a range of documents and records relating to behaviour, safeguarding and schools' curriculum, including provision for personal development. I also took account of staff and parent views submitted online via Ofsted's confidential surveys. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Sir Herbert Leon Academy 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

After the last inspection, the previous headteacher and some other staff left the school. Several new leaders and staff have since been appointed. This includes you as headteacher, joining the school in September 2022. Academies Enterprise Trust (AET) has also set up the ISB to provide support and challenge to the trust and the school. Several members of AET staff provide support to leaders in school.

On this first monitoring inspection, we focused primarily on checking the impact on leaders' work to improve safeguarding and provision for personal development. We also considered aspects of leaders' work to improve behaviour, attendance and the curriculum.

You, as an experienced safeguarding lead, have temporarily taken on the role of designated safeguarding lead. Meanwhile, you are making sure that other leaders gain experience in effective safeguarding practices. All senior leaders have now had advanced training in safeguarding. This signifies the raised profile of safeguarding in the school.

The trust has strengthened its strategic oversight of safeguarding in the school. AET leaders check more regularly that your school fulfils its safeguarding duties, including that recruitment checks are recorded appropriately and staff training in safeguarding is appropriately regular and up to date.

You have done much to improve safeguarding processes and procedures in school. Additional training and regular opportunities to discuss safeguarding have increased staff's confidence in dealing with safeguarding concerns appropriately. Regular checking of staff's understanding assures leaders that staff are alert to potential concerns and have a strong understanding of local safeguarding risks. Importantly, leaders now check thoroughly that pupils who access alternative provision are safe.

Leaders have made a strong start to improving pupils' behaviour in school. Many pupils have noticed that there are fewer disruptions to learning in lessons, and teachers say they have 'more time to teach'. However, this is not consistent across the school. You recognise that there is more to do to ensure that new systems are used well and have a positive long-term impact by helping pupils to self-regulate their behaviour.

You are making a start to tackle bullying and unsafe and unkind behaviour. Younger pupils appreciate having 'anti-bullying' ambassadors. Pupils have noticed the raised profile of safeguarding and bullying and know who they could talk to if they had a concern. However, too many said that they would not do so. Some said that they did not think that they would be listened to. Most concerningly, several pupils said that sexual harassment, racism and homophobia happen in school but that they would not report it because they did not want to be what they described as 'snitches'.

Despite some setbacks, you have made a start to improve provision for pupils' personal development. You have set out a calendar of topics to guide the content of assemblies and morning tutor sessions, along with personal, social and health education (PSHE)

lessons. Through these, pupils are starting to be taught about important aspects of life in modern Britain, fundamental British values and relationships and sex education. There are an increasing range of clubs for pupils to attend.

Leaders' monitoring has not securely checked the quality of all this provision. The PSHE curriculum is not sequenced well enough to build on pupils' prior learning. The order of the curriculum for older pupils does not take into account any gaps, particularly in relationships education. Pupils report that sometimes the curriculum is not being taught. For example, pupils could not recall any recent teaching about healthy relationships. Leaders have not thought carefully enough about how to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported to learn about PSHE and safeguarding risks.

The school's curriculum is continuing to improve. In English, pupils' knowledge at GCSE is more secure because of earlier work to strengthen the curriculum at key stage 3. In science, staff report that the newly adopted key stage 3 curriculum is showing early signs of helping pupils to learn more effectively than in the past. Staff value in-school training and support from across AET to improve curriculum content, organisation and staff knowledge. Importantly, work to improve provision for pupils with SEND and for pupils who need additional help with reading is well underway.

As a trust, AET is notably determined that Sir Herbert Leon Academy improves. The CEO's mantra that the pupils in the local community deserve a good school is compelling. The establishment of an ISB made up of well-qualified experts is making a strong contribution by challenging the trust to act on weaknesses quickly. You have set up a new leadership structure and line management process to better organise the school's work. You have appointed new senior and middle leaders, although some are yet to start at the school. Importantly, the trust recognises that for improvements to be sustainable, leadership capacity in the school needs bolstering at the moment. Several leaders from across AET regularly support in-school leaders in their work by modelling effective leadership. Middle leaders and staff are starting to feel the benefit of this reorganisation and support from the trust. They say the school is better organised and that they are starting to be held to account more effectively.

The action plan submitted to the Department for Education sets out clearly how leaders intend to make changes to systems and processes, who is responsible for checking that these happen and by when. This has helped leaders to make early improvements to the school. However, you recognise the need to refine these plans to ensure that they allow for the quality of provision and the impact changes are having to be monitored effectively.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Academies Enterprise Trust multi-academy trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Milton Keynes. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Old
His Majesty's Inspector