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Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne
Interim Executive Lead
Warren School
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Dear Mr Aalders-Dunthorne

Special measures monitoring inspection of Warren School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 29 and 30 March 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require special measures following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in June 2022.

During the inspection, I discussed with you, other senior leaders, the chair of the school improvement board (SIB), the chair of the BEST trust and with the local authority 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. I also met with the national leader of education who has been working with school leaders. I met with school staff, visited classes, spoke with some pupils at lunchtime and at play and met with representatives of the newly formed student council. I carried out a tour of the school site with you and with the chair of the SIB.

I reviewed school policies, curriculum documentation and information that is published on the school's website. I also reviewed the regular reports that are submitted to the trustees, and local authority audit reports. I looked at records of safeguarding, attendance and behaviour, including the use of physical restraint, and discussed these with leaders. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Warren 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 strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures.

Leaders are working effectively to improve the quality of education that pupils receive. They are developing the school's curriculum. Leaders are focused on ensuring that the school's curriculum provides all pupils with the knowledge and skills they need to be well prepared for the next stage of their education and/or training. Leaders are giving careful consideration to the knowledge that pupils should learn across a broad range of subjects. This is reflected in the curriculum plans that leaders are developing. Leaders are also refining the school's approaches to teaching and assessment to ensure that the curriculum is adapted well to meet pupils' individual learning and communication needs. Leaders are demonstrating their commitment to staff's continuing professional development through regular training.

Leaders have put in place a systematic approach to teaching phonics and early reading. This is being taught in all classes. Staff have been trained to teach and support the programme. Pupils practise phonics daily. This helps them to secure their knowledge of sounds in speech and in text. Pupils access appropriate books and resources that are closely matched to the sounds they are learning. Although the programme is new, there is already evidence of its positive impact in supporting pupils to develop their verbal communication, as well as their listening and understanding. Assessment of phonics is developing. Staff use assessment in lessons to check pupils' phonics knowledge and to help pupils to practise saying their sounds accurately. Pupils are excited by their learning in phonics. Leaders' regular checks on how the programme is being taught inform the guidance they give to staff. This supports staff as they develop their confidence in teaching the programme.

There is a strong focus across the curriculum on developing pupils' communication skills and mathematical understanding. Leaders have revised the curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education and are currently consulting on the new curriculum for relationships and sex education. Leaders are developing the curriculum to ensure that pupils are better prepared for independent living. Students in the sixth form are completing suitable qualifications, so that they are ready for further education or training.

Pupils and staff are positive about the recent improvements to the school environment. This work is supported by funds raised by the Warren School Association, and by grants from the local authority, and the Department for Education. Leaders have clear plans for refurbishment. Where work has been completed, this is providing more appropriate learning spaces that are better suited to pupils' needs. Work is underway to renovate the school's swimming pool. Changes to the outdoor provision have transformed pupils' experiences of play times. They are making wider friendships and developing their social skills, because they now have better opportunities to play together.

Pupils are pleased that the number of trips and visits is increasing. They regularly take part in horse riding, and visits to the gym. During the inspection, pupils attended a cinema screening. Pupils proudly explained that they raised the money to support this through their own enterprise project. Pupils are proud to be members of the student council. They understand their role is to help leaders improve the school for everyone. Pupils are keen to share their ideas. They are learning that their views matter. Pupils can see how they are making a positive contribution to their school community.

Leaders are committed to working with parents to understand their concerns and find ways forward that are in pupils' best interests. Leaders have completed an audit of their systems and processes in relation to the planning and review of education, health and care (EHC) plans. Leaders are tackling the significant backlog of annual reviews. They are working with the local authority and other agencies to ensure that pupils' EHC plans are up to date and are based on an accurate and current assessment of their needs. However, there is work still to do to ensure reviews are completed within required timescales.

Staff training to help pupils to manage their behaviour is having a positive impact. There has been a reduction in the use of physical restraint. Staff are more confident in their use of strategies that help pupils to manage their emotions and behaviour. Leaders now ensure that staff have the information and guidance they need to support pupils when they are upset. Staff anticipate when a pupil may find a situation challenging. They intervene appropriately to reduce the risk of anxiety or distress. Behaviour support plans clearly set out the individual approaches that staff should use to help pupils to be successful in managing their behaviour at school.

Leaders have further refined their systems for recording, reporting and monitoring safeguarding, behaviour and attendance. This enables leaders to act more promptly to follow up concerns. It also helps them to ensure that pupils and families can access the support they need. Leaders have worked closely with families to reduce the number of pupils on part-time timetables. Leaders intervene at an early stage to reduce the risk of persistent absence.

Leaders have reviewed the staffing and leadership structure. This is bringing clearer oversight, support and accountability across the staff team. A number of leaders are new to their roles. They are keen to make a positive contribution to further improvement. Some new leaders require further guidance to improve the provision and outcomes for pupils.

The BEST trust continues to maintain governance oversight of Warren School until the school becomes part of Consortium Trust. Staff are working positively with trust and school leaders during this period of transition. Consortium Trust is providing effective support to leaders to improve systems and processes, as well as build trust across the school and wider community. Leaders continue to work effectively with education hubs, the local authority, a national leader for education and other external partners to improve the quality of education that pupils receive.

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

Yours sincerely

Katherine Douglas
His Majesty's Inspector