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Alan Dane
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Dear Mr Dane

Special measures monitoring inspection of SGS Forest High School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 28 and 29 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 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, I discussed with you and other senior leaders, the deputy CEO of the multi-academy trust, trustees and a local governor 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 visited lessons, held discussions with senior leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), spoke with curriculum leaders, teachers and support staff, met with groups of pupils, observed their behaviour at breaktime and took into account the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for parents and staff. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

SGS Forest 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.

The school may appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that leaders' actions to improve pupils' behaviour and attitudes are informed by an incisive evaluation of pupils' experiences.
- secure good behaviour from a significant minority of pupils who find it difficult to engage positively with school life.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Since the previous inspection, two deputy headteachers have been appointed to lead on curriculum and safeguarding. They also hold the roles of SENCo and designated safeguarding lead. A large proportion of staff are newly appointed, including several curriculum leaders.

Leaders have addressed the issues of curriculum narrowing identified at the previous inspection. Pupils in key stage 3 now enjoy learning music, drama, computing and food. In music, there has been some early success. All pupils in Years 7 and 8 now take part in sustained musical instrument tuition, and Year 8 pupils are proud to have performed publicly. Pupils now spend more time learning physical education. They value this and have taken confidence from recent successes in local sports tournaments. Leaders intend to broaden the curriculum further, for example, by offering engineering, textiles and dance.

Curriculum leadership has improved rapidly in the year since the previous inspection. Leaders have introduced an effective structure for subject leadership. New leaders who have joined the school's senior and middle leadership teams have brought with them considerable expertise in curriculum design. In some subjects, the curriculum is newly implemented, whereas in others leaders are building on an existing curriculum. There remains a need to embed consistently effective teaching approaches so that pupils remember more and build on their knowledge over time.

Increasingly, teaching meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders recognise that, historically, the needs of these pupils have not been met successfully. Some parents of pupils with SEND continue to report that their child is not well supported in school. However, leaders have raised expectations for pupils with SEND. They are working intensively with staff to ensure that they have the training and information they need to provide better support for such pupils.

Leaders have reorganised the school day to prioritise reading. Pupils in Years 7 to 10 now have a regular reading opportunity to read texts with stimulating themes. Pupils who need to catch up with their reading receive support during this time. Nonetheless, leaders are not fully clear on how to match this support to the precise gaps in pupils' knowledge. Therefore, it was agreed to include a focus on this at the next monitoring inspection.

Pupils now benefit from an improved curriculum to support their personal development. A new leader has been appointed to oversee pupils' learning in this area. Leaders have rightly taken urgent action to address gaps in knowledge among older pupils. For example, pupils now have specific curriculum time which focuses on relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education and careers guidance. They report that their new 'personal development' lessons are useful and relevant.

Leaders' approach to managing behaviour is helping some pupils to improve their behaviour. However, pupils continue to experience disruption to their learning too often. A significant minority of pupils continue to hold negative attitudes towards school and lack self-discipline. Leaders' strategy to help these pupils to improve their behaviour and engagement with school is early in its implementation. Therefore, it is too soon to evaluate the impact.

The multi-academy trust has been instrumental in supporting the headteacher to provide a broad curriculum and assemble a skilled and well-motivated staff team, determined to improve the school. Increasingly, trustees and members of the local governing body provide school leaders with effective support and challenge. They ask incisive questions about the quality of education that pupils receive. However, leaders, including those responsible for governance, have not yet applied effective scrutiny to the school's work to improve pupils' behaviour and attitudes. For example, they do not have a sufficient overview of incidents of bullying. This means that when pupils and parents report concerns about bullying, leaders do not know if these go beyond individual examples. Trustees do not know enough about the reasons for pupils' poor behaviour or attendance, or the work of the school to help pupils with particular needs to improve. Consequently, actions to improve the school in these respects are not sharply focused.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer or equivalent of the South Gloucestershire and Stroud multi-academy trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for South Gloucestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Lydia Pride
His Majesty's Inspector