

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



10 May 2023

Bex Jones  
Executive headteacher  
The Sky Academy  
Pickeridge Close  
Taunton  
Somerset  
TA2 7HW

Dear Mrs Jones

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of The Sky Academy**

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 interim chief executive officer (CEO) of the multi-academy trust and other staff 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, looked at pupils' learning in books and on iPads, looked at school documentation and spoke with pupils. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

**The Sky 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 strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers.**

### **The progress made towards the removal of special measures**

The leadership team was in its infancy at the time of the previous inspection. The previous inspection report acknowledged that new leaders had started to tackle the significant weaknesses at the school. This work has continued. Substantive leaders now

have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Working alongside you, they have acted quickly to impact areas they deemed a priority. This includes behaviour, attendance and special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) awareness amongst staff to support pupils' learning. You have reorganised the structure of the school. As a result, pupils are now in small nurture groups based on their needs with familiar adults to support them. The school building has undergone some significant improvements. This has strengthened safeguarding and raised expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning.

Your focus as a leadership team to address weaknesses in the curriculum has started and you have made some important changes. Middle leaders have the necessary support in their subject leadership roles to gain a more secure oversight of their areas of responsibility. There is a core offer in place which includes English, mathematics, personal social and health education (PSHE), food technology, art, physical education (PE) and life skills. As leaders, you are aware that the breadth of the curriculum needs to be increased for some pupils and there are plans in place for this work.

Middle leaders have improved the curriculum offer in their subjects. There is now a sequenced curriculum in place that can be adapted by teachers to meet the needs of pupils from key stage 2 through to key stage 4. This curriculum offer is informed by assessment on entry to the school. The information collected about each pupil, when they transition into Sky Academy, provides staff with a range of academic and pastoral detail. Teachers use this to support pupils to learn a bespoke curriculum. This is working towards meeting their education, health and care (EHC) plan, as well as being responsive to their more immediate needs. As senior leaders, you know that elements of this require refinement to make sure it is as effective as it can be. Pupils, parents and carers are fully involved in the initial discussions to create these 'core documents' around each pupil. However, the systems in place to ensure their voice is heard when these core documents are reviewed are new and in the process of being embedded.

As a leadership team, you have ensured that middle leaders have the knowledge and expertise they need to implement an assessment system that supports pupils' progression through the curriculum. Assessment is used with greater accuracy to identify ambitious outcomes for pupils as they reach key stage 4. The intention is to use this to identify pupils earlier to ensure that they achieve the best possible outcomes at the end of key stage 4.

Leaders have focused on improving pupils' attitudes to reading and prioritising it in the curriculum. Action has been taken to identify those pupils who are at the early stages of reading. This takes place on entry, and support is put in place to address gaps in knowledge and increase pupils' accuracy and fluency. Some pupils do not yet have a positive attitude to reading. Leaders are working to improve this by developing the library and training staff in specific interventions. They have also created rewards and challenges to motivate pupils to read more widely and address the negative experiences of reading that they often start the school with.

As a leadership team, you were very aware of the need to tackle the poor behaviour and attitudes to learning highlighted in the previous inspection. Your response to this has had some considerable impact. Teachers have the support and training they need to maintain high expectations of pupils. The school restructure has played a crucial role in this. Pupils now learn in nurture groups where the relationships with, and consistency of, adults are prioritised. Pupils describe the changes positively. They feel that staff work with them and give them time to talk when they are dysregulated. Pupils agree they feel listened to and that many of the staff understand their needs. The impact of this work can already be seen on pupils' attendance and fewer behaviour incidents. There are still areas of this work you have identified as needing further attention. These include embedding and evaluating the effectiveness of the current range of alternatives to suspensions. There are plans in place for this to happen.

Governance is currently provided through the interim CEO. You and your senior leadership team ensure that the CEO has an accurate and well-informed view of the school. You have continued your drive for improvement despite the imminent changes at trust level. Most staff feel well supported by the leadership team, despite the rapid journey of improvement. You have ensured that there has been significant professional development for staff to meet the demands of the improvements you are making. Parents are mostly positive about the school. They comment on the difference in their children since joining the school and how well their children now manage their education.

The trust has commissioned external support to strengthen aspects of the school's action plan where relevant. This includes a focus on the development of the curriculum and the core offer that is in place. There has been a recent shift in the focus of this support from a strategic perspective towards a more operational focus. The senior leadership team seeks to engage external professionals' involvement. The team uses this successfully to ensure that pupils get the most effective education to support them to manage their own behaviour and dysregulation. In addition, both senior and middle leaders make effective use of external networks to strengthen the impact they make in their areas of responsibilities.

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

Yours sincerely

Leanne Thirlby  
**His Majesty's Inspector**