

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231  
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16 November 2022

David Lord  
Interim Headteacher  
The Brooksbank School  
Victoria Road  
Elland  
West Yorkshire  
HX5 0QG

Dear Mr Lord

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of The Brooksbank School**

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 5 and 6 October 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 February 2022.

During the inspection, Julian Appleyard, Ofsted Inspector (OI), and I discussed with you and other senior leaders 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 held meetings with different groups of staff, spoke with pupils, visited lessons and scrutinised a range of documents, including important safeguarding records. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

**The Brooksbank 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 am of the opinion that the school may appoint early career teachers.**

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that robust systems are in place so that those pupils who are too often absent are supported to attend school regularly.

- ensure the effective implementation of an appropriate personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum so that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

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

There have been a number of changes to staffing, including at senior leadership level, since the graded inspection in February 2022. Additional leaders have been appointed to the senior leadership and pastoral teams. A second deputy headteacher has taken up post and a new interim headteacher has recently been appointed. The interim headteacher is the chief executive officer of the Together Learning Trust (TLT). The process for the school to join the TLT is well underway.

During this monitoring inspection, we focused on the recommendations from the previous graded inspection which related to the school's safeguarding arrangements, the behaviour of pupils, and leaders' oversight of these aspects.

New leaders have accurately identified the underlying causes of the safeguarding concerns raised at the previous inspection. Leaders have taken the right steps at the right time to bring about much-needed change. While it is too early to see the impact of some of their work, the significant improvements in safeguarding and behaviour are clear.

As a result of leaders' actions, safeguarding at the school is now effective and pupils are kept safe. Following the last inspection, leaders took immediate action to address the most serious concerns. There has been a complete overhaul of safeguarding systems and processes. Leaders have provided comprehensive safeguarding training for all staff. As a result, staff know the safeguarding risks that pupils face. Staff know how to report any concerns about pupils' well-being and safety. Leaders follow up these concerns promptly. Many pupils are now more confident to voice any concerns that they have. There are strong systems to monitor these responses. Leaders use this information, together with wider information about behaviour and attendance, to check that they have an accurate picture of pupils' well-being.

Staff know which pupils are vulnerable. They have strong oversight of these pupils. Reasonable adjustments are made to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, there is more work to do to strengthen the communication between the pastoral team and the SEND team regarding suspensions. Leaders must ensure that relevant information is shared between departments in a timely fashion so leaders can assure themselves of the appropriateness of decisions, particularly those regarding suspensions of pupils with SEND. The school's in-house alternative provision 'The Link' has been transformed. It has re-opened as a safe and welcoming space where pupils are well looked after and undertake meaningful work.

Leaders have ensured improvements to the safety of pupils on the school site. Staff are routinely visible around the site at social times and between lessons. This has helped to reduce truancy and improve punctuality. Pupils and staff agree that the school is a much

safer place than at the time of the last inspection. There are rarely any fights, and pupils know the importance of reporting any concerns to a trusted adult. Younger pupils are confident that staff would help them with any worries they have. Some older pupils are more reluctant to ask for help or to report an incident. A few pupils are still not confident that all staff would take effective action.

Leaders have taken swift action to improve pupils' behaviour. A new behaviour policy sets out leaders' high expectations. New arrangements for breaktimes and lunchtimes have brought a sense of order to social times. However, despite highly visible staff, some pupils continue to be concerned at the behaviour of others. For example, some pupils continue to be worried by crowded corridors. A few pupils persist in showing a lack of respect for school rules and for each other. We witnessed some of this unruly behaviour. Senior staff model the consistent approach they expect staff to take. However, despite this, a small number of staff do not address poor behaviour in line with leaders' expectations.

As a result of improved systems to record behaviour incidents, leaders are beginning to analyse a wider set of information. They consider the reasons behind incidents and use information to help pupils who struggle with their behaviour more effectively. There are increasing numbers of 'success stories' for some pupils who now engage successfully with their learning as a result of the support they receive. Pupils receive clear messages that derogatory language is not to be tolerated. Staff routinely challenge pupils when they hear this language. This work is beginning to have an impact. Although pupils are increasingly punctual to lessons, a number of pupils do not have high enough levels of attendance. Leaders have strengthened the systems to analyse data about attendance. This helps leaders to make informed decisions about how to improve attendance for these pupils. New staffing appointments mean that there is robust follow-up and support. It is too soon for leaders to have the evidence that their work is having a sustained impact.

Pupils were happy to speak with us. They conducted themselves well in discussions and listened thoughtfully to each other's views. However, pupils are not being well prepared for life in modern Britain. Although pupils are clear that respect and tolerance for others are important, this clarity does not stem from a secure knowledge of protected characteristics, or other aspects of the PSHE curriculum. A new curriculum is in its infancy. Leaders have plans to further refine it so that it builds an understanding of tolerance, respect, the development of character and a considered appreciation of difference and differing cultures.

As a result of the serious safeguarding concerns raised in the last report, school leaders, including governors, have received external support. There have been focused support and additional capacity at a leadership level from Education Exchange and from the TLT. Leaders value these associations and draw on their continued support as they build sustainable change. Staff, parents and pupils recognise how far the school has come from a low starting point. Some parents remain concerned, but many recognise that the school has 'turned a corner'. Leaders need to engage more effectively with the whole community so that parents are aware of leaders' work to improve the school and share in their successes.

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

Yours sincerely

Eleanor Belfield  
**His Majesty's Inspector**