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David Allman
Chief Executive Officer and Acting Headteacher
The John Warner School
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Dear Mr Allman

Special measures monitoring inspection of The John Warner 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require special measures following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in October 2022.

During the inspection, Diana Osagie, Ofsted Inspector (OI), and I discussed with you, trustees, governors, senior leaders 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 met with pupils, visited lessons and looked at the school's systems and school improvement documentation. I considered the Ofsted survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, and that for staff. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

The John Warner School remains inadequate and requires special measures. Leaders have made insufficient progress to improve the school.

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

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Since the previous inspection report in October 2022, there has been a change in the leadership of the school. The chief executive officer for the trust has stepped into the role of interim headteacher. A new safeguarding leader took up the post of designated

safeguarding lead in January 2023. Other leadership roles have remained unchanged. During this monitoring visit, inspectors focused on leaders' actions to improve the curriculum and provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They also focused on improvements to behaviour, safeguarding and leadership.

Leaders have not improved the quality of the curriculum since the last inspection. The picture remains the same. A number of subjects are missing curriculum plans; this includes the core subjects of mathematics and English. While leaders now know where the gaps are, these have not been addressed. This combined with staffing issues means that pupils' experience of the curriculum varies, and, in some subjects, this limits their progress.

The use of supply staff is high for some year groups. Due to the lack of curriculum plans, some teachers and subject leaders are planning for multiple classes daily. This increases their workload. Pupils report that work can be random and not connected to what has gone before. Sometimes pupils will have no teacher for their lesson, or the teacher will leave partway through due to bad pupil behaviour.

The provision for pupils with SEND has worsened since the last inspection. Leaders do not have in place a system for the identification of pupils' needs. Staff have not updated pupil support plans. The churn of staff means that pupils' needs are not met in lessons. Pupils with SEND, like their peers, are struggling to access the curriculum. The SEND department has few staff. Support for pupils with education, health and care plans is weak.

Leaders have made little improvement to the provision for early reading. While leaders have tested pupils' reading ages, they have not checked pupils' gaps in their phonic knowledge. As yet, there are no trained staff in place to teach a phonics programme to pupils who need to learn to read.

Pupils' behaviour remains poor. Leaders have not established a culture of self-regulation, respect and tolerance. While they have stopped mass movement out of lessons and improved pupils' access to toilets, negative behaviours are the norm. Leaders have reviewed some aspects of the policy. However, staff are not applying the behaviour policy consistently. Leaders have not delivered training for staff on how to manage behaviour effectively.

Safeguarding remains ineffective. Pupils do not feel safe at school. They have not learned how to treat each other with respect. Leaders have strengthened the curriculum for personal, social and health education. There is an added emphasis on positive behaviours. However, leaders have not made sure that staff are delivering the intended lessons. Abuse, whether that is physical or verbal, is a common experience for many pupils. Pupils report that they are anxious and worried about attending school. Some younger pupils seek 'protection' from older pupils. They do not trust staff to help them. Too often, they say staff turn a 'blind eye'.

Leaders have improved their recording and categorising of safeguarding incidents. Actions undertaken by staff and communication with parents are logged. Leaders are addressing the bullying incidents reported on in the spring term. The refinements to the system mean that leaders now have helpful information to monitor and act upon.

Leaders do not have adequate plans in place to address the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. The plans do not include how leaders and governors are going to build capacity and strengthen leadership. Since the inspection, the senior leadership team have not undertaken training to improve the discharging of their function. This is also the case for middle leaders; several are new to their roles. Governors are visiting the school and meeting more often to check on the progress the school is making. However, due to the slow improvement, they are still not holding leaders to account effectively.

Morale remains low with some staff. They see little difference in their day-to-day experience of school. The issues are the same, and they have many concerns. Parents share these concerns. A high proportion of the free-text comments made by parents via the survey Ofsted Parent View express anger and disappointment at their child's continued poor experience of school.

The use of external support is in the early stages. Another trust has advised on how to improve the safeguarding system and music provision. The local authority has provided guidance on how to get the early reading programme started. I recommend that the school seek additional support and guidance for the improvement of leadership, enabling capacity to improve.

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

Yours sincerely

Liz Smith
His Majesty's Inspector