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Michelle King
Headteacher
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Dear Ms King,

Special measures monitoring inspection of Idsall School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 17 and 18 May 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 September 2022.

During the inspection, Sue Morris-King, Senior His Majesty's Inspector (SHMI), and I discussed with you, the chair of the trustees, other members of the trust board, and other school 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 also carried out visits to lessons, looked at documents related to safeguarding, behaviour and the curriculum, met with a group of staff and groups of pupils, observed pupils' arrival at school, observed break and lunchtimes, and talked to pupils and staff informally throughout the day. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Idsall 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 school should take further action to:

- ensure that all staff have a clear understanding of leaders' expectations for pupils' behaviour and the way in which they should manage behaviour, and support them to do so consistently and effectively.
- closely analyse their behaviour data so that they are able to identify trends and patterns in incidents of poor behaviour and use this information to provide targeted support to those pupils and staff who need it.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Since the inspection in September 2022, there have been changes to your senior leadership team. One of your deputy headteachers has left, and a former assistant headteacher has been promoted to the role of deputy headteacher. You have also recently appointed two new assistant headteachers, one responsible for teaching and learning, and the other for the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Both had been at the school for four weeks at the time of the inspection. You have also recently appointed a new head of English, who is due to start in September. Currently, there are some gaps in staffing, which you are working to fill ready for September.

During the inspection, we focused on the areas for improvement that were identified at the last inspection, related to relationships between pupils, aspects of safeguarding, areas of the curriculum, including curriculum planning, reading and the provision for pupils with SEND, as well as how leaders assure themselves of the quality of their work. In addition to this, we also focused on behaviour and the management of behaviour. The evidence shows that since the previous inspection, you, well supported by the trust and by your new senior leadership team, have begun to take the right steps forward to improve the school. While these actions have been well chosen, some of your work has started slowly. This is mainly due to staffing issues which have hindered your plans for improvement. The addition of extra capacity within the senior leadership team is beginning to have an impact, and there is an increased sense of urgency to the changes being made. Staff are working well with you to implement these changes. They feel well supported and recognise the need for change.

Leaders have put careful thought into the development of the curriculum. You have made sure that subject leaders have had the time and space to think about the precise knowledge they want pupils to learn. They are beginning to define this knowledge and order it sensibly. While there is more work to be done across most subjects, this work is beginning to help teachers to design lessons that clearly outline the key knowledge pupils ought to learn. Too often, however, the behaviour of some pupils is hindering the delivery of the curriculum. Most of the pupils we spoke to during the inspection told us that behaviour in lessons is not positive and that there is a lot of disruption. This aligns with the evidence gathered during lesson visits.

Leaders have recently begun to address issues relating to pupils' behaviour. However, presently, pupils are not clear of the expectations that leaders have of their behaviour.

This is because teachers are unclear of the expectations, and inconsistent in their application of the behaviour policy. Additionally, there remains a lack of systematic analysis of behaviour data. Consequently, leaders have not yet taken the right actions to support teachers to manage behaviour, or to help pupils to regulate their own behaviour more effectively. Leaders recognise the need to re-focus their attention on improving pupils' behaviour and are being supported by trustees to do so.

The leaders of SEND have identified what the most urgent priorities are, in order to improve teachers' confidence in meeting the needs of pupils with SEND and their ability to do so. They are working hard to ensure that staff are provided with the information and support they need. While some appropriate steps have been taken, there is more work to be done. Currently, staff are provided with a range of information about pupils' needs, but do not use these consistently well. Additionally, some of the information given to staff is not as specific to pupils' needs as it might be. Leaders are working to address these shortcomings.

You have begun to tackle the weaknesses in reading identified at the previous inspection. However, the work you have done so far has not allowed you to develop a clear understanding of the gaps in pupils' reading ability. As a result, it is unclear if the support these pupils are receiving is helping to address any gaps in reading ability. You have not yet reviewed the progress or impact of this work.

The single central record is compliant, with all relevant checks in place. You now have a clear system in place to check on and respond to any gaps within the record. You acted quickly to resolve the issues with the single central record identified at the previous inspection. Safeguarding case files are detailed. Those looked at during the inspection showed that leaders are responding swiftly to any concerns raised about pupils and taking appropriate action to keep pupils as safe as possible. Following the last inspection, leaders have rejuvenated their approach to safeguarding training. All staff now complete a broad programme of ongoing training modules to ensure they have the knowledge and skills required to identify pupils at risk of harm. The designated safeguarding lead ensures that these training modules are well supported by additional guidance bulletins. This work is beginning to shift the culture of safeguarding at the school.

While leaders have begun to reshape their personal, social, health and economic education curriculum in response to concerns raised about sexual harassment and discriminatory behaviour in the previous inspection, more work is needed to secure improvement. Staff have yet to have the training and support they need to tackle the challenging concepts within the subject, and leaders have not made sure they have an accurate understanding of pupils' views and experiences. Pupils told inspectors that incidents of discriminatory behaviour are still frequent. Leaders understand that this work needs sharper focus.

Supported by the trustees, you have developed strong links with a range of external providers to support the development of your work. You and your leadership team are driven. You are committed to improving the school. You have been proactive in

developing these links, and welcome the challenge provided. You are well aware of the need for careful coordination of this support so that messages to leaders and staff are consistent.

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

Yours sincerely

Alexander Laney
His Majesty's Inspector