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28 June 2023

Mrs Jo McKeown  
Executive Principal  
Test Valley School  
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Hampshire  
SO20 6HA

Dear Mrs Jo McKeown

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Test Valley School**

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 23 and 24 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 October 2022.

During the inspection, Mike Boddington Ofsted Inspector (OI), Dave Euridge OI and I discussed with you and other senior leaders and staff, members of the local authority and the interim executive board 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 visited lessons, spoke to a number of pupils and staff and observed pupils' behaviour. I scrutinised school documents, including safeguarding records, and considered the responses to the staff and parent surveys. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

**Test Valley 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 not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.**

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

Following the last inspection, you were recruited in January 2023 to improve the standards in the school. In this time, you have significantly increased the capacity of the school leadership team. You have recruited a new head of school and a special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). You have employed two specialist staff to provide therapeutic interventions to support pupils and their families. You have also increased the pastoral support team so that pupils have an identified adult to oversee their well-being. The local authority has established an experienced interim executive board (IEB) to provide governance. These positions are relatively new. However, your strategic planning in advance of their recruitment has meant that they have been able to take immediate action. Many staff and pupils recognise the period of positive rapid change that the school is currently going through.

Leaders are clearer in their ambition for the curriculum. In an increasing number of subjects, leaders have carefully ordered the knowledge and skills that pupils need to know. Leaders have worked alongside external advisors to ensure the curriculum intent is equally ambitious for all pupils. You have audited curriculum plans to ensure that topic breadth and depth is comparative to the national curriculum. You have struggled to recruit sufficient teachers to some specialist subject areas. Currently, pupils in key stage 3 do not learn music or computer science. However, you have recruited teachers for the new academic year to resolve this issue.

You have increased the size and expertise of the team, supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). All pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan have had these plans reviewed. The SENCo has also secured EHC plans for pupils who need them. This team is now reviewing support plans for all pupils with SEND. These plans have not yet been shared widely. Consequently, staff are not adapting learning to sufficiently meet the specific needs of pupils with SEND. Interventions to help pupils with SEND engage more positively with school are reducing incidents of unsafe behaviour.

The curriculum is not yet being implemented in an effective way to enable all pupils to learn well. Teachers have been provided with a framework to help them teach lessons in the 'Test Valley Way'. This includes clear and consistent starts to all lessons and regular questioning opportunities. However, this is not yet well embedded by all. Teachers do not regularly check how much knowledge pupils have retained before moving on. Therefore, not all pupils are learning as well as they should. Leaders plans to develop pupils reading are clear and thoughtful. However, this has not yet been implemented. This means that pupils who need additional support to read well are not yet getting the help they need.

Many pupils told inspectors that there has been a positive shift in the way pupils behave in school. This is because the new behaviour policy makes expectations clear. In lessons, there is still some variability in the way that staff apply the behaviour policy. This means that pupils report that learning can be disrupted. Pupils know that they can report worries to any member of staff, including issues around bullying. Leaders use behaviour contracts and reports to make it clear what is expected of pupils who struggle to comply. There is an increased trust that leaders will deal with pressing concerns. However, pupils are still

cautious about how effectively they will receive the support they need to resolve their worries.

Pupils do not see the importance of reporting the use of discriminatory language. To address this, you have developed a responsive personal, social and health education curriculum to educate pupils about the impact of prejudicial behaviour. You are in the process of sharing the curriculum with parents and pupils. There are now opportunities through the new school council for pupils to have a say in the way aspects of the school operate. For example, the council is currently developing new sustainable seating areas around the school for children to enjoy at breaktimes.

You have made essential improvements in safeguarding arrangements. All staff have received training to understand the risks that pupils may face. Policies now reflect the most up-to-date guidance. Weekly safeguarding updates ensure that all staff are knowledgeable when providing support for pupils who need it. Detailed records indicate the steps that leaders take to seek additional help from professionals. Further work is needed to ensure that support plans for pupils at risk are reviewed appropriately. You have introduced 'out of bounds' areas during breaktime to increase pupil supervision. However, further work is needed to limit pupil access to unsupervised areas throughout the rest of the day.

The school is in the process of academisation. While this transition is underway, the school is accessing effective support from a local multi-academy trust, the new IEB and the local authority. Regular visits focus on leaders' progress against the school improvement plan. Senior leaders regularly evaluate how effectively their actions bring about positive change. Parental surveys show that parents feel increasingly informed about the school's journey towards improvement.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Hampshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Lower  
**His Majesty's Inspector**