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Christine Hill
Interim Headteacher
Brooke School
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Dear Mrs Hill

Special measures monitoring inspection of Brooke School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 12 and 13 July 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, Anna Vrahimi, His Majesty's Inspector (HMI) and I discussed with you, senior leaders, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the multi-academy trust, other staff and trustees 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, held meetings with curriculum leaders and looked at curriculum planning documents. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Brooke 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 progress made towards the removal of special measures

The previous headteacher left the school in January 2023. You were appointed as interim headteacher shortly after this. A new substantive headteacher is due to join the school in September 2023. Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes to the governance of the school. Five trustees have left and five new trustees have joined the trust board. The trustees disbanded the local advisory board and established an interim executive board (IEB) in November 2022, comprised of members of the trust board. This visit focused primarily on the quality of education.

You and your leaders are taking well-considered actions to address the weaknesses highlighted at the time of the previous inspection. As part of the work, you have ensured that senior leaders understand their roles and responsibilities clearly. You have paid serious attention to supporting them in developing their leadership skills. Consequently, these leaders are growing in confidence. They are increasingly well placed to lead improvements in their specific areas of responsibility.

You have set out a clear and ambitious vision. Staff appreciate this clarity, and most are on board. As part of this vision, you are committed to improving pupils' opportunities to develop their independence. You have made some changes to routines to enable this to happen. Increasing numbers of pupils, for instance, are now eating together in the main hall at lunchtime. This is helping to promote pupils' social skills. Furthermore, you have taken important steps to improve the learning environment. As part of this work, you have improved the appearance of corridors and created a food technology room. You have plans for pupils to use this room to develop important life skills such as food hygiene and cooking.

Leaders are improving many aspects of the curriculum. You and your leaders have created three distinct pathways for pupils. Leaders have designed these pathways so that pupils' work is more closely matched to their specific needs. You have ensured that pupils, regardless of their pathway, are now studying a broader range of subjects. Pupils welcome these changes. Many told us how much they enjoyed learning new subjects. There is now greater clarity about what pupils will learn and when in some curriculum areas. In these subjects, leaders have identified the precise knowledge that they want pupils to know and remember at each stage. For example, in personal, social, health and economic education, staff plan for pupils to develop their knowledge of relationships over time in a sensible and logical order. This means staff are much clearer about what to teach and when. Consequently, pupils are experiencing fewer sequences of lessons that are jumbled and disconnected. However, leaders know that this is not the case for all subjects. There is still more to do in some areas such as music, art and design and technology.

In the early years, you and your leaders have prioritised improving the learning environment. Classrooms are now more appropriately resourced to meet children's developmental needs. However, this is not the case in the outdoor area. This remains under-developed. In addition, your leaders have provided training for adults within the early years. This training is starting to make a positive difference.

You and your leaders are taking effective action to promote a love of reading. You have taken some important initial steps. The school, for instance, has a brand-new library that is bright and welcoming. In addition, teachers regularly read well-chosen books to pupils. A carefully chosen selection of books is helping pupils to improve their understanding of words and to broaden their knowledge of various well-being and social issues.

The teaching of reading is improving. Leaders in most year groups have made appropriate checks to identify pupils' stage of reading. Leaders are using the information from these checks well. Your leaders, for instance, ensure that pupils get lots of practice at reading books that match their reading needs well. You and your team have also acted to develop staff's expertise in teaching the school's reading programme. Staff have completed initial training in how to do this. Nonetheless, the teaching of reading remains inconsistent. Some staff lack the knowledge to teach reading well and to overcome the barriers that impede some pupils' learning. Leaders know this and have coherent plans to improve staff's expertise further.

Trustees are playing a significant role in driving improvements, particularly through the IEB. Their work is sharply focused on the areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection. Trustees have taken effective steps to develop their own knowledge and skills. They now have a greater understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Trustees increasingly use a wide range of evidence, including from their visits to the school, to identify what is working well and what needs further improvement. All of this means that they are holding you and your leaders to account more effectively.

You and your leaders have greatly valued the wide range of support they have received from various external partners. In particular, your leaders have benefited from support to develop their leadership skills, the teaching of early reading and work to develop the curriculum. You have greatly appreciated the work of an external consultant who has supported you in monitoring the impact and effectiveness of the changes you and your team have made.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the CEO or equivalent of the Unity multi-academy trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Warwickshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Stevens
His Majesty's Inspector