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Jenny Cave
Headteacher
Farnborough Grange Nursery & Infant Community School
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Dear Ms Cave

Special measures monitoring inspection of Farnborough Grange Nursery & Infant Community School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 20 and 21 June 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, Caroline Clarke, His Majesty's Inspector (HMI) and I discussed with you and other senior leaders, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the multi-academy trust (MAT) and members of the interim academy board (IAB), 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 and spoke with groups of pupils, parents, carers and teachers. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Farnborough Grange Nursery and Infant Community 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

Since the previous inspection, the trust, led by the CEO, has appointed an IAB to oversee the school's improvement. This board temporarily replaces the school's local committee. There has been significant staff turnover affecting some year groups, although leadership in the school has remained stable. During my visit, I focused primarily on the quality of education, early years, and leadership and management because these were the areas judged as inadequate when you were last inspected. I also looked closely at the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), the behaviour of pupils, and how well you use assessment. These aspects of the school are those mentioned within the areas for improvement in your last report.

You and your team have made a strong start to improving the curriculum, but you recognise that this work is further ahead in some subjects than others. You have rightly prioritised early reading, and this is a relative strength in the school. The training that leaders have provided to staff has resulted in consistent and effective approaches being used across the school, right from nursery. As a result, pupils are learning to read well. There is regular assessment of reading, which helps teachers to understand any gaps in pupils' knowledge. If a pupil falls behind, teachers identify this quickly and make sure they get effective support to help them catch up. Although still inconsistent in some year groups, the curriculum in mathematics and the way this is delivered is also further developed than other subject areas.

You have an ambitious vision for what you want pupils to know and remember in foundation subjects, but this is not yet realised. Leaders have improved the quality of curriculum plans to ensure that they are well-sequenced and broad, in line with national curriculum expectations. Within these plans, leaders have identified precisely what they want pupils to know and remember right from the early years. You recognise that these plans have been introduced recently, so the impact on pupils' learning is very limited. Pupils still have significant gaps in their knowledge and find it difficult to recall what they have learned. This is having a particularly negative impact on those pupils who struggle with reading and writing or have SEND. Sometimes, the tasks chosen by teachers are not suitable because some pupils need more support to access them. This includes nursery and reception, where children would benefit from clearer direction and higher-quality interactions with adults.

Your plans to improve assessment have been delayed, meaning that there is limited progress in this area. Other than in reading and mathematics, teachers are not skilled in using assessment to identify learning gaps. This prevents them from adapting the curriculum for pupils' needs and results in some tasks being too difficult and others not challenging enough. Some pupils have developed a range of misconceptions, which have not been challenged. Working with other leaders in school, you have developed a new assessment policy which you intend to implement in the near future.

You and your team have improved the way in which you identify the needs of pupils with SEND, including screening for speech, language and communication needs when pupils

join the school in the early years. Leaders have provided training to staff, but recognise that more needs to be done to make sure they have a secure understanding of pupils' individual needs and how to adapt learning when required.

A new policy for behaviour has been introduced very recently. During the inspection, we were able to see the early signs of this having an impact. You and your team have introduced a simpler set of expectations, which you expect all staff to uphold. There are also individual plans in place to support a small number of pupils who struggle with their behaviour, some of whom also have additional needs. These strategies are having a positive impact, particularly in the classroom where most pupils are now focused on learning in the majority of lessons. However, at social times, some pupils and parents are concerned about unkind behaviour such as name-calling or aggressive behaviour between pupils. Adult supervision in the playground does not ensure that this is routinely addressed. However, you and your leadership team deal with these issues appropriately if they are reported to you directly. You acknowledge that there is more to do to strengthen behaviour, particularly using data to be more strategic in your interventions.

Members of the IAB are drawing on their substantial expertise to provide strong challenge and support. They evaluate progress regularly against the agreed action plan to ensure that the school is improving quickly enough. They commission external partners, as well as experts from within the trust, to find out in detail about particular focus areas such as reading and early years. As a result, they have an accurate understanding of the school's current position. You are well supported by executive leaders, including the trust's director of education, who helps you to consider further improvements and monitor the impact of those you have introduced already.

Safeguarding remains effective. During my visit, we discussed ways to strengthen your record-keeping further. We also discussed the importance of connecting information about behaviour and safeguarding more rigorously when making decisions about either.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim academy board, and the chief executive officer of The Good Shepherd multi-academy trust, 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

Chris Ellison
His Majesty's Inspector