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Dear Jill Walker

Special measures monitoring inspection of Milton School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 27 and 28 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 second 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, I discussed with you and other senior leaders, the chief and deputy chief executive officers of the Venn multi-academy trust, other staff, the chair of the ICAT multi-academy trust and leaders from Education Exchange 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 carried out visits to lessons, met with staff and pupils and reviewed safeguarding documentation, including the school's single central record. The views of staff and parents were considered through conversations surveys, including Ofsted Parent View. Documents, such as the development and improvement plans, were also reviewed. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Milton 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

While much remains to be done, significant progress has been made since the time of the last monitoring visit in March.

As a result, during this visit, I was able to consider progress made in relation to curriculum development, as well as considering aspects of behaviour and safeguarding. Staffing at the school has become more stable. Two assistant headteachers are now in post and an appointment has been made for another assistant headteacher to join the school in September 2023. Appointments to vacant teaching positions have also been made. Some of these staff are working at the school now, and some will join in September. One of the new assistant headteachers is the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), and one has oversight of the early years. This, alongside effective support from Education Exchange, which had only just started at the time of the last monitoring visit, and from leaders of the Venn multi-academy trust, which the school will very soon join, means there is now much more leadership capacity. You have welcomed this support and it has been used effectively to begin the journey of improvement.

Overall, governance structures at the school remain weak but there have been improvements in strategic oversight at governance level. This has resulted in strong support being delegated in the school and swift decisions to ensure that the school joins the Venn multi-academy trust as quickly as possible.

Safeguarding has strengthened significantly since the last monitoring visit. Pupils that I spoke with feel safe in school. The site is now more secure due to improved fencing and fire alarm procedures. Pupils abscond far less frequently than was previously the case. Staff understand the procedures to follow in the event that pupils do leave the school site. Improvements in the way that concerns are logged and categorised on the school's information systems have had time to embed and records show that there are swift actions in place to follow up on concerns. A daily debrief for each of the different bases means that there are chances to share important information. Pastoral leaders use this information to help them plan for the next day. These approaches are helping to improve behaviour. The site was calm when I visited. There is evidence that the number of suspensions has recently started to fall.

Recent improvements in recording the use of physical restraint now ensure that you have clear information that allows for specific interventions to be developed for individual pupils. This work is still in the early stages. Pupils still feel that behaviour can be disruptive and, while training has been delivered, staff need more support to help them manage behaviour effectively and to follow up on well-being concerns that may arise after dealing with challenging behaviour.

Improvements are being made to the school site. There is now a more appropriate outdoor space for children in the early years. Building work is planned to improve classrooms and to improve systems around the drop-off and pick-up of children.

Attendance remains low. Procedures are now in place to identify and work with specific pupils to encourage better attendance. There is better analysis of data to ensure that plans can be made to work with children. As with many other areas of the school, you have worked on developing systems and processes based on the information available so that you can better support children. These systems need time to embed.

The development of the curriculum has progressed swiftly since the last monitoring visit. There are now clear pathways for pupils. Long- and medium-term plans have been developed for many areas of the new curriculum. This is not fully completed but you are confident that it will be in place by September 2023.

You plan for one of the new assistant headteachers to lead on phonics. Pupils have been assessed using the school's chosen phonics programme. Training for staff is planned in July and September to launch the new curriculum. You are aware that these plans are only a first step. Support for teachers, teaching assistants and other adults will be important to ensure that the new curriculum is successfully implemented. There are plans to strengthen subject leadership. You, and other leaders, are aware that pupils' current experiences of lessons do not provide the support and learning they need. Very recent work has been done to ensure that staff receive clear information about pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans. The new personal target tracker provides a clear system to record key targets and allows staff to assess progress against a pupil's EHC plan. While there are areas of the school where this is being used well, for example in the early years, this is not fully embedded and not all staff have received training on this system.

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

Yours sincerely

Matthew Vellensworth
His Majesty's Inspector