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8 August 2023

Sarah Storer  
Interim executive headteacher  
Holgate Meadows School  
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South Yorkshire  
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Dear Ms Storer

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Holgate Meadows School**

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 3 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 third monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require special measures following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in March 2022.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other senior 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. I also met with the chair of the transition board and the regional director for NEXUS Multi Academy Trust. I met with some curriculum leaders and teachers. I had a tour of the school and visited some lessons. I met with a group of pupils and scrutinised a variety of documents, including some action plans to improve attendance for individual pupils. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

**Holgate Meadows 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**

Since the last monitoring inspection, the process of the school joining the NEXUS Multi Academy Trust has continued. However, this process has been delayed due to the financial insecurity of the school. This is being addressed with a staff restructure and ongoing negotiations with the local authority regarding funding arrangements and placements for pupils. Despite the extra challenges that this delay has caused, you and your team have continued to concentrate on school improvement priorities. This inspection concentrated on the progress made by the school to improve the curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of pupils, and on the systems in place to improve the analysis and recording of leaders' actions to keep pupils safe.

There is now a shared and clearly understood intent for the curriculum. The content for each subject is linked to the three core intent strands that aim to promote pupils' academic achievement and personal development and prepare them for adulthood. Curriculum leaders have ensured that each subject has a 'road map' so that teachers can be clear about how pupils' learning journey is mapped out across the school. Progression maps detail the knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn and in what order. Schemes of learning identify the most important knowledge that pupils need to know. They are designed to show teachers what learning has come before and how current learning links to pupils' personal development and can support their preparation for adulthood.

Curriculum leaders have a much-improved understanding of the whole school curriculum and how individual subjects can be linked to connect learning for pupils. They are rightly proud of their work to improve the planning of the curriculum. They appreciate the external support and guidance that they have received. Teachers are highly positive about the improvements. However, you recognise that there is further work to be done to ensure that the new approach to the curriculum is implemented effectively and that teaching is consistently of a high quality.

Leaders have begun to develop improved systems to assess pupils' progress in English and mathematics. There are appropriate assessments in these subjects to check what pupils know and can do when they join the school. Leaders can now track what pupils learn in personal, social, health and citizenship education. They can make sure that all pupils cover all necessary aspects of this curriculum. Subject leaders are now in the process of beginning to develop assessment for other areas of the curriculum. However, the assessment of pupils' individual needs when they join the school is not linked clearly to curriculum planning. There is still work to be done to use the data collected on entry to inform curriculum planning and provision for individual pupils.

You are aware that the quality of support that pupils currently receive in lessons is not as effective as it should be. You have plans in place to train staff to provide more skilled support, including to promote pupils' independence. One of your assistant headteachers has been working closely with a specialist adviser for school improvement from a special educational needs and/or disabilities hub. The advice and support have successfully supported the assistant headteacher to identify ways that pupils can be better supported in

lessons, including by resources and adapted teaching. Although these strategies have yet to be fully implemented and there is more to do, the creation of an amended approach to the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning has been warmly received by staff.

The designated safeguarding lead has accessed further external support to help him with the recording and analysis of the actions taken to keep pupils safe. Procedures have been tightened and improved to make sure that pupils, particularly pupils who are persistently absent from school, are safe. Leaders work proactively with external partners and professionals to get pupils the support that they need. Action plans to encourage pupils to attend school have improved. These are now more rigorous and demonstrate leaders' tenacity, including to support pupils to access education in the community or to take up further education or training, when appropriate. You have identified that this more forensic approach to safeguarding and tackling persistent absenteeism needs to continue and develop further. You have appropriate plans in place to ensure that this will happen.

Although the school is experiencing a turbulent time, there are positive aspects to celebrate. Pupils recognise the continuing improvements. They appreciate the new playground equipment. They enjoy the 'praise' points that they collect and save towards a class reward of a trip or experience. Pupils are extremely proud of one of their peers recently winning Sheffield's 'Big Challenge' enterprise competition. Staff and pupils are equally proud that the leader for the school's careers programme has recently received an award from the South Yorkshire careers hub for the 'most visionary careers programme'.

You continue to receive support and advice from the regional director for the trust. You value this support and the support from external school improvement advisers and members of the interim executive board (IEB). You are ensuring that your school improvement plans remain appropriately focused.

There continues to be a significant proportion of pupils whose needs cannot be met by the school, or who are persistently absent or attend alternative provision on a full-time basis but remain on the school's roll. The welfare and safety of these pupils remain your highest priority.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephanie Innes-Taylor  
**His Majesty's Inspector**