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15 September 2023

Rachel Gourley  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Gourley

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Huxley CofE Primary School**

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 18 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 March 2022.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other staff, members of the interim executive board (IEB), and representatives of the local authority and diocese 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 visited lessons, met with pupils, carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work and evaluated a range of other documents. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

**Huxley CofE Primary 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**

During this monitoring inspection, I focused on those aspects of the school identified as most needing improvement when the school was last inspected in March 2022. This included governance and the quality of the curriculum, including for children in the early years.

There have been changes to staffing since the previous inspection. For example, a new teacher has joined the school. A special educational needs coordinator now works at the school for one day each week. This appointment has helped to support the improvements in the quality of education for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Following the previous inspection, the local authority acted swiftly to replace the governing body. An IEB was quickly formed. The IEB is composed of members with a broad and suitable range of experience and expertise. They ensure that statutory duties are fulfilled, including in relation to safeguarding. Importantly, the appointment of the IEB, coupled with the external support from the local authority, means that your efforts to move the school forward have gathered momentum.

You have worked closely with members of the IEB and staff to develop a clear vision for the school. Staff fully understand the part that they will play towards realising this vision. You have made sure that all members of the school community, including parents and carers, are fully on board. Those parents who responded to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, would not hesitate to recommend the school to others. They appreciate all that you and the staff do to meet their children's academic and wider needs.

Following the previous inspection, you acted decisively to address the considerable weaknesses in the curriculum. You have meticulously designed the overall curriculum to take into account the unique context of pupils at the school. This has given much-needed structure and purpose to pupils' academic diet. Pupils who are flexi-schooled access the same curriculum as those who attend school full time. Significantly, pupils who attend school every day no longer tread water on those days that the other pupils are not in school.

You have further set about ensuring that the curriculum is suitably broad and ambitious. Pupils now benefit from learning the full complement of national curriculum subjects. You have made sure that teachers have received sufficient guidance to deliver the curriculum well. This has been enhanced through focused training and support from the local authority. Consequently, teachers now have the subject knowledge that they need to deliver the curriculum confidently. However, the curriculum is still at an early stage of being put in place. Pupils have not developed a rich body of knowledge across all subjects.

At the time of the last inspection, some pupils displayed a lacklustre approach to reading. You have acted to strengthen pupils' love of reading. Pupils now access a wide range of

high-quality reading materials linked to an ambitious English curriculum. They read to adults regularly and enjoy making reading recommendations to each other. You have created enticing reading spaces where pupils and their parents share books together. This includes the well-stocked and welcoming reading caravan. Pupils said that they enjoy reading. For some, reading calms them down and meets their emotional needs.

You have focused on improving the curriculum for children in the early years. This includes redesigning the learning environment to better meet children's developmental needs. You have identified the important content of the early years curriculum. You have also ensured that the key stage 1 and 2 curriculums build well from the early years. This means that children in the early years now gain the knowledge and understanding that they need to succeed in their future learning. However, your plans for improvement have been hampered to some degree by instability in staffing. You are in the process of recruiting staff to further strengthen provision in the Reception Year.

Alongside improvements to the curriculum, you have developed staff's understanding of how to check and build on pupils' prior learning. This is most evident in mathematics. Here, staff know how to adapt their delivery of the curriculum so that pupils gain fluency and accuracy over time. In other subjects, it is less clear how staff make effective use of assessment information to address gaps in pupils' knowledge. This means that pupils do not build their knowledge as well as they should. That said, pupils are beginning to benefit from the new curriculum. They can confidently discuss the broad knowledge that they have gained recently. However, their recall of previous learning lacks sufficient depth.

At the time of the previous inspection, weaknesses in wider leadership capacity were a barrier to improvement. In response, you have put appropriate leadership arrangements in place. For instance, you have appointed leaders for each curriculum area. You have made effective use of support from the local authority to provide these leaders with appropriate training and development opportunities. Subject leaders now have a better understanding of their roles. They are starting to take more ownership of their areas of responsibility. This is helping to drive forward the improvements needed to the curriculum. However, more remains to be done to develop new leaders' oversight of how well pupils are learning in their areas of responsibility.

You have sought specialist advice and guidance to review and improve the provision for pupils with SEND. For example, you have drawn on the expertise of members of the IEB to commission a SEND audit. This has provided clear actions for further improvement. Appropriate systems are in place to ensure the early identification of pupils' needs. Pupils with SEND receive focused, timely and effective support. This helps these pupils to access the curriculum alongside their classmates.

Despite the significant changes that you have had to make, including raising expectations of how well pupils should achieve, staff morale is high. They value your consideration of their workload and well-being.

Members of the IEB use their expertise to maintain a sharp focus on your actions to improve the school. They provide appropriate challenge and support to you and other staff. The IEB has been pivotal in securing the future stability of the school through driving the process of academisation forward. This process has gained traction and is now at an advanced stage.

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

Yours sincerely

Jackie Stillings  
**His Majesty's Inspector**