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Dear Ms Guest

Special measures monitoring inspection of Grove Primary School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 21 and 22 November 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 March 2022.

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's overall effectiveness, but to identify and report on the school's progress. It is to highlight to the school and parents any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, Sarah Steer, Ofsted Inspector (OI), and I discussed with you and other senior leaders, members of the interim executive board and the local authority 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 lesson visits, spoke with parents, pupils and staff, viewed pupils' work and looked at a range of documents. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to be no longer judged as requiring special measures.

The school may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Since my last monitoring visit, you have maintained a sharp focus on improving the school. The leadership team members have a clear understanding of their roles, and they work together well. There have been some recent changes in staffing. A new mathematics subject leader has joined the school. The teacher who previously had responsibility for leading mathematics has become the special educational needs coordinator. Staff express positive opinions about working at the school. There is a team spirit and a shared sense of purpose about making further improvements.

You have continued to prioritise work to develop the school's curriculum. The commercial scheme of work that the school adopted prior to the previous inspection is now better embedded. Curriculum leaders have identified the knowledge they expect pupils to know and remember in each subject. They set this information out in curriculum 'pillars'. These changes are making a positive difference, but there remains more to do. Sometimes, the subject-specific knowledge that pupils are expected to remember could be made even clearer. You are aware of this and intend to make further refinements to develop the curriculum.

The school is successfully strengthening the expertise of subject leaders. You have provided training and support to improve their effectiveness in monitoring the quality of education in each subject. The approach to monitoring is well organised and feeds into leaders' school development planning. Leaders have so far focused primarily on the quality of what is being taught. This has provided them with useful information to help refine the design of the curriculum. However, leaders' work to understand the impact of the curriculum on pupils' knowledge is in the very early stages.

There are still many pupils who do not know and remember the subject-specific knowledge that leaders expect. This is reflected in the school's weak outcomes in end of key stage tests. Leaders are determined to help pupils catch up but the approach to assessing pupils' progress through the curriculum is not yet fully implemented. Although teachers make checks on pupils' understanding in lessons, leaders do not yet have an approach in place to identify how well pupils know and remember the curriculum over time. This makes it difficult for teachers to identify and close any gaps in pupils' learning.

You have identified that some pupils do not learn to read as well as you expect. The school has a well-embedded approach to teaching phonics, but you have recently decided to sharpen school practices in teaching early reading. Staff have benefited from additional training and support. You are prioritising work to help pupils who have fallen behind to catch up quickly.

Leaders have made several improvements to the way that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported. The school's SEND register now reflects pupils' needs more accurately. Pupils' education, health and care plans are reviewed regularly. Some parents of children with SEND note these recent changes and feel that the school's provision is strengthening. Nevertheless, you recognise the need to further

improve this aspect of the school's work. Often, pupils' SEND targets are not linked closely enough to the intent of the school's curriculum.

You have embedded initiatives to promote pupils' behaviour and attendance. This work is starting to make a positive difference. Pupils understand the school's rules and behave well most of the time. The school is calm and pupils are mostly happy. Your analysis of patterns in attendance shows you that pupils are beginning to attend school more regularly. You intend to continue raising expectations to further enhance the school's learning culture.

The interim executive board maintains its determination to improve the school. Members of the board review a range of information to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's improvement work. They have focused on ensuring continuity in staffing and on supporting leaders' well-being. This has brought stability to the school. However, leaders have not placed enough emphasis on evaluating the impact of the curriculum. They do not yet have a clear understanding of how well pupils know and remember subject-specific knowledge.

Leaders value the support that they have received from the local authority. This support has proved useful in the school's work to start developing staff's curricular expertise. This is having a positive impact on the school's improvement work.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Leonard
His Majesty's Inspector