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Rachel Brindley
Interim headteacher
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Dear Ms Brindley

Special measures monitoring inspection of The John Warner School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 5 and 6 December 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 October 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, Cindy Impey, Ofsted Inspector (OI), Diana Fletcher, OI, and I discussed with you, the CEO of Danes Educational Trust, members of the interim action board, other senior leaders, and staff 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 met with pupils, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, and reviewed the school's systems and school improvement documentation. I considered responses to the Ofsted survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, and that for staff. 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.

I am of the opinion that the school may appoint early career teachers.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Since the first monitoring visit, in March 2023, The Hoddesdon School Trust Board stood down the local governing body of the school. An interim action board was appointed on 1 September 2023. The previous acting headteacher and CEO of The Hoddesdon School Trust also left. The current interim headteacher and interim deputy headteacher work for Danes Educational Trust. They started leading the school at the beginning of this academic year. The school is in the process of re-brokerage to Danes Educational Trust.

During this monitoring visit, inspectors focused on the school's actions to improve the curriculum, provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), safeguarding and behaviour. Inspectors also focused on improvements in relation to leadership.

Danes Educational Trust, working with the interim action board, has increased leadership capacity. The trust has worked at speed to ensure that the school changes rapidly. The school is a different place to that seen in March. The extensive support for the school at all levels of leadership means the school is more stable. Pupils are benefiting from continuity of staffing. There is little use of supply staff. A root and branch evaluation of what is working and what is not has informed leaders' strategic direction. School improvement plans are clear and purposeful. The documentation is specific about the improvements required, how this will happen and by when. Staff work to short-term goals, and this drives forward improvement at a rapid pace.

Improvements to the curriculum are underway. Staff are ensuring that curriculum plans have greater coherence and ambition. The strengthening of the assessment system enables staff to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. This includes pupils' phonics knowledge. Staff have received training to deliver the school's chosen phonics programme and other suitable reading programmes. Those who need support with their reading are now receiving helpful intervention.

The quality of teaching is getting better. Staff are appreciative of the support provided by the new trust. They have access to regular training, subject discussion groups and networking events across schools. Pupils are finding lessons more engaging and purposeful. This includes pupils with SEND. There is now a system in place for the accurate identification of pupils' specific needs. The school has undertaken extensive consultation with parents of pupils with SEND to ensure they have the latest information. As a result, staff have greater awareness of pupils' needs and the support they can put in place. Some staff are still struggling to adapt the curriculum sufficiently to help pupils with SEND learn well in lessons. Staff are receiving ongoing training to improve this aspect of their teaching.

Staff are using the new behaviour policy and system for dealing with poor behaviour effectively. Pupils are clear about the school's expectations and the consequences for different types of behaviour. The new leaders are winning hearts and minds. Pupils want to behave better and are being helped to do so. They are hopeful for the future, as they

see their school improving. All are benefitting from a school site that is now calm and well organised. Support staff appreciate the high visibility of the senior leadership team.

Safeguarding is now effective. There is a tangible safeguarding culture in the school. The change in pupils' behaviour means that staff and pupils feel safe at school. Staff and pupils are clear about when to report concerns and why. The strict window of time in which staff have to deal with issues, including bullying, means that pupils now trust the system. Pupils know that if they report a concern, it will be dealt with. Safeguarding systems are stronger. Pastoral staff understand their roles and their responsibilities for safeguarding pupils. They liaise effectively with external agencies, promptly acting upon information and remaining vigilant.

Staff, while working hard to effect change, are happier. They have clear direction, feel supported, listened to and valued. They know that there is still a lot of work to do. However, they are confident that, with the support of the new trust, they will turn the school around quickly. Most parents also share this confidence. They feel well informed about the changes that are happening and can see, already, the strong work that has taken place in just one term.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the CEO of Danes Educational Trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Hertfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Liz Smith
His Majesty's Inspector