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Gemma Earles
Principal
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Dear Mrs Earles

Special measures monitoring inspection of Bradford Forster Academy

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 23 and 24 January 2024, 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 2023.

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, Zoe Helman, His Majesty's Inspector, and I discussed with you and other senior leaders, the CEO, the director of secondary education of the multi-academy trust, other staff, trustees, and governors 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 visited lessons, carried out work scrutinies, held meetings with staff and pupils and considered the responses to Ofsted surveys for staff and parents. 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 previous inspection, there have been significant changes to the school's leadership. You took up the post of principal in September 2023. The trust has acted swiftly with you to increase the capacity of leadership. This has provided leaders with the space and time to focus diligently on the priorities identified in the action plans. The appointment of two new senior leaders was quickly followed by a redefining of roles. This has ensured that leaders have a sharp focus on their areas of responsibility but are not working in isolation.

Leaders at all levels are united in their focus to improve the school. Action plans have been strategically developed. They provide effective support and reference for changes. The adaptations to practice that have taken place since the last inspection have been done collaboratively with the trust and the staff body. This has helped to ensure there is clarity in actions and that staff apply these actions consistently.

Leaders meet regularly and share information with staff, the trust, and governors. This has ensured that all staff are part of the process of improvement. Areas for improvement, such as behaviour and attitudes, are broken down into manageable focus areas. Internal truancy and school uniform are two such examples. As a school, the focus on ensuring pupils are in class is having a positive impact. Fewer pupils are outside the classroom when they should be learning. Changes to pupils' uniforms have drawn on pupils' and parents' views. This has helped to inform the decisions made by the school. There are clearly defined expectations in terms of footwear and the wearing of coats inside the school. The school is fully aware of the importance of engaging with the community and knows there is more to do in this area. The newly formed parent-teacher association and links with local youth organisations are two examples of the changes that have recently been implemented to strengthen engagement with parents and the community.

The new approach to managing pupils' behaviour is grounded in consistency. This is starting to have a positive effect. While progress has been made, the school is not complacent and knows there is further effort needed to support pupils, both in and outside the classroom, when behaviour is poor. Staff presence around the school site is strategic and has been planned to support pinch points where behaviour has been an issue. Pupils feel that this has helped to address the areas in the school where they previously did not feel comfortable. Staff relationships with pupils are positive, and pupils are listened to by staff. Pupil welfare is at the forefront of the school's actions. The prefects in school help to share the views of the wider pupil body. These views are considered and used to inform actions. For example, pupils' access to staff to help with subject support at important times has been refined.

Pupil attendance is a high priority. A clear strategy for how to address and improve attendance is in place. The implementation of the strategy has improved attendance and reduced persistent absence. Leaders at all levels describe work on focus areas for improvement in terms of 'lift and sustain'. This reflects leaders' determination to make changes that are built on strong foundations and are strategically planned. These changes are checked for impact before moving on to the next step of improvement.

Personal development in the school has been refined and is now taught by a small team of staff. The curriculum content is mapped and structured over the five years that pupils spend at the school. The curriculum is also supported through form time when specific topic areas are covered. Leaders are quick to respond to any need that may arise, adapting the curriculum accordingly. For example, they work with the designated safeguarding leader to identify particular needs that will support the pupils to be safe in school and the community. Wider opportunities are a focus for leaders and are being developed further.

The additional leadership capacity has helped to ensure that the quality of education pupils receive is not neglected. The school is aware that the most recent set of examination outcomes in 2023 are weak. Whole-school initiatives to support learning have been introduced in a controlled manner. The most recent changes, such as learning zones within the lessons, are yet to be fully embedded.

The school draws on expertise from within the trust and beyond to provide support, challenge, and professional development. Additional staff have also been recruited to the central trust support team. This has allowed more time for the staff from the central team to work with the school on improvement areas. The selection of who the school works with externally to the trust has been carefully considered. This has ensured the support is appropriate and relevant for the pupils and community that the school serves. These working partnerships with other schools, other trusts and individuals are in place and continuing to develop.

The school also has a productive relationship and enjoys a positive working relationship with the diocese. This is integral to the school's values and ethos.

The local governing body and trustees are supportive of leaders at all levels. They use their expertise well to guide leaders in improving the school. Regular meetings to review the impact of actions taken support leaders well. The academy is a valued member of the trust. In addition to drawing on support from the trust, the school contributes to the development and sharing of strong practices across the trust.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the CEO of the Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Leeds, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Bradford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Richard Jones
His Majesty's Inspector