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Dear Mr Graham

Special measures monitoring inspection of Leek High School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 27 and 28 February 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 fourth 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, Sara Arkle, Ofsted Inspector, and I discussed with you and other senior leaders, the CEO and deputy CEO of the trust, other staff, trustees, and members of the interim executive board (IEB) 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 spoke with subject leaders about the curriculum, visited lessons, spoke to pupils, looked at pupils' work, considered safeguarding, looked at safeguarding, behaviour and attendance records, visited the internal exclusion room, spoke to a range of pupils and considered the views of parents using Ofsted Parent View. 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

You continue to receive excellent support and challenge from the expert IEB. Since the last monitoring visit, the IEB, the trust and trust leaders have started to work together more effectively to support the school. This has resulted in all parties having a clear understanding of how well the school is doing and where additional support is needed. As a result, the trust has supported you well in making rapid improvements to the support provided for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and for those at the earliest stages of reading. The trust is now providing support and capacity to the school to make the improvements needed to the curriculum.

Since my previous visit, you have set about making significant improvements to the quality of education in your school. In nearly all subjects, the curriculum is now well sequenced, and teachers know what to teach and when. You have identified that a few subjects are not yet sufficiently planned to meet ambitious end points. You are giving the teams leading these subjects enhanced support. This work is starting to have an impact. You know there is some further work needed to refine and review the curriculum, and this now forms part of your school review processes.

Delivery of the curriculum is still inconsistent. You know this and have a 'rapid improvement plan' in place to address it. In some subjects, the choice of teaching methods and resources does not support pupils' learning of the intended curriculum as well as it should. This limits pupils' ability to do well. In those subjects that have clearly identified component knowledge, assessment is well focused. Most teachers check for understanding and address misconceptions before moving learning on.

Support for pupils with SEND has much improved. The school has updated the information that staff receive about pupils with SEND. Staff have received training in how to support pupils with SEND, and there is a thorough training plan in place to make sure that all staff have the skills and expertise to support pupils' needs well. Teachers are now using some strategies to support pupils with SEND more effectively. However, sometimes, the strategies and resources that teachers use are not suitable, and this hampers the progress that pupils with SEND are able to make.

Pupils at the earliest stages of reading are now being systematically taught to read. The gaps in pupils' reading knowledge are precisely identified, and interventions are delivered well by skilful staff. As a result, pupils who experience difficulty in reading are now catching up quickly.

You have maintained your focus on improving pupils' behaviour. Behaviour in most lessons and around the school is calm and purposeful. Suspensions and referrals to the school's internal exclusion room remain much lower than in the past. Weekly pastoral meetings use behaviour data intelligently to put in place proactive support for pupils who are beginning to struggle. As a result, the number of behaviour incidents continues to fall.

Pupils' attendance continues to improve. It is now significantly above the national average. You work closely with pupils and families to help remove the barriers to good attendance. This work has greatly reduced the number of pupils who are severely or persistently absent.

You continue to benefit from the external support you receive. This has helped to add capacity to your team and provide appropriate challenge to ensure that you continue to improve the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Claire Price
His Majesty's Inspector