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Dear Mr Kay

Special measures monitoring inspection of South Shore Academy

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 25 and 26 June 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 June 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 and carers any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, Paula Crawley, Ofsted Inspector (OI), and I discussed with you and other senior leaders, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust and other trustees, the CEO of the interim trust and members of the local governing body 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, met with pupils and staff and reviewed a range of documentation. We also met with a representative of another multi-academy trust providing external support. We have considered all this in coming to our 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 strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

In recent months, the process for the school to be re-brokered into a new trust has started. The interim headteacher took up post in May 2024. Additional senior leaders from the interim trust are supporting the school. Since the previous inspection, the current trust leaders have brokered external support from another multi-academy trust. The interim headteacher, the interim trust leaders and external support partners, are working together to handover responsibilities as the school is re-brokered.

Leaders at all levels have accepted the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. The school has an accurate and realistic understanding of the progress that it has made and its future priorities. The school has faced some obstacles along its journey to improvement. This has sometimes slowed the urgency of its actions. However, more recently, with extensive support from the interim trust, the pace of change has increased considerably. As a result, the school is taking effective action to tackle the most pressing shortcomings at the school, especially pupils' behaviour. The comprehensive action plan includes a range of appropriate strategies to bring about further improvement.

Eradicating poor behaviour and establishing an effective culture for learning has been a key priority. A new approach to managing pupils' behaviour, while in its early stages, is having a positive effect. New routines are enabling the school to reinforce the expectations of behaviour to pupils and staff. The shortcomings in the previous pastoral systems have been addressed and changes have been made to the structure of the school day. This has laid the foundations for clear behaviour systems that are understood by everyone.

Overall, staff's expectations of pupils' behaviour have risen. Most staff follow the new approach to managing pupils' behaviour consistently well. This is helping many more pupils to learn without unnecessary disruption. Pupils who spoke with inspectors were united in their view that their experience of school is more positive. Suspensions from school are declining. However, there remains a small, but considerable number of pupils who do not abide by the school's behaviour systems. They continue to cause disruption around the school.

Pupils' behaviour during lesson changeovers and at social times is also getting better. There is an increased staff presence around the school building. This is helping to ensure that pupils' movement in corridors and staircases is more orderly. The school has introduced guided transitions between lessons, where pupils are escorted by staff to their lessons. As a result, incidents of internal truancy have fallen considerably. The school has moved the location of the dining hall, introduced lunchtime seating plans and increased supervision with additional staff. This is bringing about a calmer lunchtime experience for pupils.

Reducing pupils' absence from school has been a key focus since the previous inspection. However, the capacity to develop systems and procedures to track and analyse attendance remain weak. Although the school, together with the interim trust, has

prioritised building leadership capacity to improve attendance, this work has not started. As a result, many pupils continue to be frequently absent.

Alongside the improvements in pupils' behaviour, there have been positive changes to the overall curriculum offer. In a very short time, the interim trust has successfully reorganised the structure of the curriculum as well as the timetable for teaching. This has already been implemented. As a result, pupils are experiencing a more cohesive structure to their learning. This change has also paved the way for a stronger curriculum to be in place from September 2024, using a well-established curriculum that has had proven success in another contextually similar school within the trust. This means that pupils can study subjects equivalent in scope and ambition to the national curriculum. Additionally, a greater number of pupils who will enter key stage 4 in the 2024 autumn term will study the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects. However, the work to implement the new curriculum is in its infancy. Consequently, pupils are not currently experiencing a good enough standard of education.

With support from the interim trust, the school is beginning to review teachers' subject knowledge and teaching expertise. Many teachers do not have the necessary skills to implement the new curriculum effectively. Subject training for all staff has been prioritised in readiness for the launch of the new curriculum in September. While initial training for some subject leaders has been helpful in gaining a common understanding of curriculum delivery and assessment strategies, this has not cascaded to staff across all subjects. This means that there is not a common understanding of the new curriculum's aims or agreed methods for implementation.

Pupils who find reading difficult are identified accurately. A phonics programme and other reading strategies have been introduced to help pupils who have gaps in their reading knowledge. However, the school's systems to monitor the impact of this work on pupils' reading skills are underdeveloped. This means that these pupils do not receive the tailored support that they need to read confidently and fluently.

The school has brokered external expertise and harnessed support from the interim trust to address the areas of weakness identified at the time of the previous inspection. Although the school is going through the transition of being re-brokered into a new trust, it has remained open, collaborative and committed to ensuring a joined-up approach throughout the handover process. The school recognises that the re-brokering to the interim trust has established secure foundations for improvement.

The interim leaders, together with the members of the local governing body, have a strong commitment to improve the school. Although the formalities of re-brokering are not complete, the school, along with other staff members from the trust, has hit the ground running with precise, focused actions. Although some aspects of governance have stalled during this period of change, members of the local governing body are suitably equipped with the expertise to provide support and challenge for the school as it continues its journey of improvement. Staff value the school's efforts to protect their well-being and workload during this time of change.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the CEO of Bright Futures multi-academy trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Blackpool. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Kate Bowker
His Majesty's Inspector