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James Roberts
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Dear Mr Roberts

Special measures monitoring inspection of Linthwaite Clough J I & Early Years Unit

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 15 and 16 October 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 September 2023.

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's key and (where applicable) provision judgements, 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, I met with you, your senior leaders, the chair of the interim executive board (IEB) and a representative from Kirklees local authority. I also met with representatives from Together Learning Trust, which is currently providing external support. We discussed the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We also discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work, discussed learning and school life with pupils and scrutinised a range of documents, including those related to the curriculum and safeguarding, and the school's single central record. I also reviewed responses to Ofsted Parent View, the online survey for parents and carers, and the staff survey. 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 no longer be judged as requiring special measures.

The school may appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Since the previous inspection, there have been several changes in the leadership of the school. The headteacher has left the school. Initially, there was an interim headteacher in place, seconded from another school full time between April 2024 and July 2024. A new head of school and a new assistant headteacher were appointed from September 2024. The previous interim headteacher continues to support the school one day a week. An IEB was established in December 2023. The school is in the process of academisation to join a multi-academy trust.

This monitoring visit focused on improvements to the quality of the curriculum and safeguarding. However, I also gathered evidence about behaviour and the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Since the external support from the trust began, in January 2024, along with the appointment of yourself and your assistant headteacher, you have wasted no time in prioritising the most urgent issues. You have brought clarity and direction about what the school needs to do next, which is appreciated by staff and the majority of parents. Staff are fully committed and dedicated to making improvements for pupils at the school.

The curriculum has undergone significant change. You have made a strong start to improving it. You have acted decisively to ensure it is carefully planned and sequenced across all subject areas. Although the implementation of the curriculum is at its early stages in some subjects, you have ensured that it is ambitious and well thought through. You have identified and made clear to teachers what you expect pupils to learn from the early years to Year 6. You recognise that these plans have been introduced recently so the impact on pupils' learning is very limited. However, during the inspection, I was able to see early evidence of the positive impact of the curriculum on teachers' confidence and subject knowledge. Pupils also spoke confidently, using the subject knowledge they have gained, to explain their geographical and scientific understanding.

The school has restructured the leadership of subjects and clarified curriculum responsibilities for staff. Staff are accessing appropriate professional development to support them in their roles. Subject leaders benefit from opportunities to work with others in similar roles across the trust. Senior leaders work alongside middle leaders to help them understand their responsibilities. You have put in place a clear action plan for coaching and mentoring to ensure that monitoring carried out by subject leaders is appropriate, effective and timely.

You have implemented consistent approaches to the teaching of early reading and mathematics across school. The books pupils read match the sounds they are learning. Developments in these core areas have been underpinned by recent staff training. In classrooms, some improvements in the quality of teaching are evident. However, there is further work for the school to do to sharpen its attention on supporting those pupils most at risk of falling behind their peers.

The trust's support has been instrumental in improving the provision for pupils with SEND.

Recent changes to the way that pupils' needs are identified and supported are not fully embedded. You acknowledge that provision for pupils with SEND does not yet ensure that all pupils have their needs identified and met so they have the opportunity to achieve well.

The school has successfully introduced a new behaviour policy. Expectations for behaviour have rightly been raised. Pupils know the behaviour systems. They say that they are fair. Staff and pupils state that behaviour has improved. Pupils are proud to wear their new school uniform, which gives them a sense of belonging. Routines have been established and are becoming embedded. During the inspection, pupils behaved well in lessons and at unstructured times. They followed routines positively when transitioning between playtime and learning. There was a calm and purposeful atmosphere in school. As part of these improvements, the school environment has been redeveloped. There is a stripped-back approach in classrooms, with spaces used only to display what is useful to staff and pupils. Pupils use these displays well to support their learning.

Pupils' attendance is showing strong signs of improvement. Information is now readily shared with parents about learning time lost due to unauthorised absences. You are supporting families with any barriers to attendance. You carefully monitor the attendance of individual pupils and groups of pupils to inform your actions.

The trust has provided exceptional external support. Members of the IEB are drawing on this, and their own substantial expertise, to oversee the improvements made and provide strong challenge and support. The IEB evaluates progress regularly against the agreed action plan to ensure that the school is improving quickly. The trust and school leaders have an accurate understanding of where the school is on its journey to improvement, as well as the work still to do to ensure that all pupils receive high-quality education.

Safeguarding remains effective. You have successfully prioritised this to strengthen safeguarding procedures at the school and you have urgently addressed any previous safeguarding concerns. There is a rigour around the reporting of safeguarding and clear oversight of any concerns from school leaders. Any concerns raised are acted on swiftly.

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 Kirklees. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Gordon
His Majesty's Inspector