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Rachael Downs  
Interim Headteacher  
Harper Bell Seventh-day Adventist School  
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Dear Mrs Downs

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Harper Bell Seventh-day Adventist School**

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 15 July 2025 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 February 2025.

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's key and 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, Stuart Clarkson (HMI) and I discussed with you and other senior leaders and staff, the co-chair of governors, the director of education from the North England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists board (the NEC board) and a representative from the local authority 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, spoke to a number of pupils and staff and observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at social times. We scrutinised school documents, spoke to staff, parents and carers and considered the responses to the staff survey and to 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 no longer be judged as requiring special measures.**

**The school may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.**

**The position regarding the appointment of early career teachers will be considered again during any monitoring inspection we carry out.**

Since the most recent graded inspection, there has been a considerable increase in the capacity of the school leadership team. You were recruited in February 2025 to improve the quality of education that pupils receive. Since this time, the school has recruited a temporary assistant headteacher who has taken on the role of special educational needs coordinator. Leaders have reorganised staffing to enable the deputy headteacher to play a more strategic role in the school. The school has stabilised the teaching team by appointing experienced teachers, including in the early years. It has also made further appointments to ensure that, from September, all classes will have a full complement of teachers in place.

The school now has a clear and ambitious vision for providing high-quality education to all pupils. It has put in place a measured approach to school improvement that aims to embed the necessary changes over time. However, some of the leadership appointments that have been made are temporary arrangements. The lack of permanent leadership structures could limit the long-term improvements that the school needs to make.

You and other school leaders are clear in your ambition for the curriculum, but you also acknowledge that there is more work to be done to identify any gaps that pupils have owing to inconsistent teaching over time. Leaders have established more rigorous checks of pupils' achievement, particularly for the most vulnerable pupils. This is helping the school to understand the curriculum changes that are needed to support pupils to achieve well over time.

The school's work to develop the curriculum for phonics and early reading remains at an early stage. Nonetheless, it has established a subject leader who has engaged with a local English hub to strengthen their knowledge of how to successfully oversee the quality of phonics provision. The school has plans for further training when stable staffing is in place in the autumn term. Leaders have purchased new materials for the chosen phonics programme to support the delivery of a more consistent approach. In the early years, where staffing has been stable for a longer period, the impact of a more effective and consistent approach to the teaching of phonics is beginning to show. Pupils show a love of reading. However, there is not yet a whole-school approach for addressing gaps in older pupils' reading skills.

Systems and processes to effectively identify the additional needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have been strengthened. The school now has an accurate picture of pupils' individual needs. Individualised learning plans now set clearer actions to support these pupils. However, a significant amount remains to be done to ensure all staff know how best to support pupils' needs so that they can access the curriculum alongside their peers. The school plans to reform the break-out spaces and

facilities for pupils with more significant needs so that a more inclusive approach will be in place when pupils return after the summer break.

The early years provision has been positively transformed in recent times. Routines and expectations are more clearly embedded. Children are more engaged with learning activities which are now carefully tailored to their individual needs. Leaders have plans to enhance the outdoor provision and opportunities for children's physical development. This work is scheduled to be undertaken during the summer break.

Pupils are polite and courteous. Where more stable staffing has been in place, pupils demonstrate more positive attitudes towards their learning and low-level disruption has reduced. However, leaders acknowledge that in some classes where pupils have been more adversely affected by frequent staffing changes, improvements are still needed to help pupils to focus on their learning. In the autumn term, the school intends to engage with external support to further enhance and enrich pupils' experiences both within and outside the classroom. It plans to relaunch its behaviour expectations when new staff and children join the school in the new term.

Safeguarding is effective. Leaders have valued the external support that they have received to further strengthen the systems and processes in place. They have increased the school's capacity to enhance the pastoral support that pupils receive. Parents are grateful for the stability of staffing and the relationships that staff have with them and their children. Workshops and informal coffee mornings are beginning to improve how well parents are informed about their children's experiences at school.

Staff have a renewed confidence in the leadership at the school. They are motivated and excited about the improvements that have already taken place. They appreciate the support for their workload and well-being while these necessary improvements are made. Some staff, however, feel that further support and training are needed so that they can better support pupils with more complex needs.

The governing body is highly protective of the school's unique identity. Governors are committed and invested in supporting the school to improve. The governing body, supported by the local authority and the NEC board, has taken action to improve its oversight of the school. This has included a governance review supported by an external consultant and a skills audit. Governors now have clearly defined roles linked to their skillset and a more robust schedule of monitoring and evaluation is in place.

The school is becoming more outward-looking and is engaging with external support. It is building links with local schools and English and mathematics hubs to offer whole-school support and individual bespoke training. However, the additional opportunities this creates for collaboration and sharing good practice are in their infancy.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of governors, the director of the NEC board, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Cathy Young  
**His Majesty's Inspector**