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Stephen Garside  
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Dear Mr Garside

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Lea Hall Academy**

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 26 and 27 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 July 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, I discussed with you and other senior leaders, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust, the chair of the board of trustees and the chair of the academy education board 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. I also visited lessons, met with teachers and pupils and reviewed a range of documents. 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 strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers.**

## **The progress made towards the removal of special measures**

Since the last inspection, you and trust leaders have appointed a new leadership team, allocating responsibilities that have been aligned with the improvement needed across the school. This new team in its entirety has been in place since April. It has increased capacity to build on the foundations for improvement that have been put in place over the last year.

One of the most important changes since the school was last inspected is the greater stability in staffing. Although currently the school remains dependent on a high number of supply staff, this has reduced, and from September there will only be one permanent vacancy. This will provide the stability that leaders and pupils need to drive forward the improvements required.

The school's improvement plan focuses on the right things. You have identified what needs to be done and when, prioritising those actions that will have the greatest sustained impact over time. In line with those plans, you have begun much-needed work on developing the curriculum. Learning overviews for English, mathematics, science and physical education are now in place, from Year 3 to Year 9. This means that in these subjects, teachers know what they should be teaching when, so that learning is sequential and supports pupils to achieve the identified end points. The next steps are to complete work on the underpinning medium-term plans that set out the component parts to be taught.

You are aware that there remains much work to be done in other subjects to ensure that pupils can learn and achieve their full potential. This is particularly important in key stage 3, where historically there has been little formal curriculum in place.

You have recognised that poor reading skills are a significant barrier to many of your pupils. To this end, you have appointed an assistant headteacher to lead on this aspect of the curriculum. A phonics programme is now in place. Teachers and support staff have been trained and pupils are beginning to engage as they recognise and respond to the tried and tested routines of learning to read. Suitable support has also been put in place for those who have mastered decoding and need to focus on comprehension or fluency. Parent workshops aimed at arming parents and carers with the skills to support reading at home have been popular. It is too early to see the impact of this work, but some notable individual successes have started to emerge.

Developing pupils' love of reading is also high on the agenda and daily reading for pleasure sessions have been established. However, pupils' vocabulary is often underdeveloped and remains a barrier to reading for enjoyment. You understand that as the curriculum is further developed there needs to be a specific focus on ensuring that vocabulary development is built into all learning in all subjects.

You have been keen to develop the wider curriculum so that pupils are better prepared for their next steps. To this end, you have introduced a programme that offers a precursor to

the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Currently in its infancy, you have suitable plans in place to develop this into a whole-school programme. Your aim is to enable pupils of all ages and abilities to participate in a wide range of social and cultural activities to increase their understanding of the world around them, as well as to support their personal aspirations.

Since the last inspection, you have raised expectations of pupils' behaviours. The introduction of a new behaviour policy is supported by most staff and usually implemented consistently. However, a few staff do not feel able to challenge aspects of the policy because there is no clear channel of communication for doing so. You are keen to rectify this so that all staff are able to contribute their views. Nonetheless, the behaviour of pupils has improved significantly since the last inspection. Pupils are aware of the impact this has on enhancing their learning environment and how much they can achieve. Several expressed their pride that they often meet the higher expectations and that they have earned their teachers' trust. They spoke about the increased opportunities they have to go on a range of visits because they have learned how to interact with others more positively.

You and trust leaders have given appropriate urgency to ensuring that safeguarding is now effective. Safeguarding processes and procedures have been reviewed, improved and shared with staff, so that pupils feel safe and are safe. Staff know that all concerns, no matter how small, must be shared and recorded. This means that leaders are able to quickly identify where a pattern of concern may be emerging and take preventative action, often supported by the pastoral team. You have also taken steps to identify the local contextual risks that pupils face both in the school locality and around their home areas. Using this information, you have developed a programme that will bring in key partners to work with pupils to help them keep themselves safe. As a result of this work, pupils now say that they are very confident that there is always somebody they can talk to if they have a problem and that they will receive the help they need.

The trust has supported the school effectively. It has recognised the need to increase leadership capacity as part of that support. Increasingly, as the new school leadership team has taken shape the trust has been able to step back to offer greater challenge. All leaders have a common understanding of what they want to achieve and where they are in that process. You are aware that there is a significant amount of work still to be done but are confident that the foundations are now in place.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the CEO of Forward Education Trust, 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

Mel Ford  
**His Majesty's Inspector**