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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 12 December 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 second 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 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 discussed with you and other senior leaders, and the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust 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, spoke with teachers and pupils and reviewed a range of documents and records. 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.

HMCI strongly recommends that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers.

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

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Since the last monitoring inspection, you and trust leaders have maintained your focus on improving behaviour. You have also built on the curriculum developments in early reading, English and mathematics, noted at the previous visit. The process of designing and implementing the curriculum for foundation subjects is now underway. Consequently, the focus of this visit was on the implementation and impact of this work.

The school's work to improve early reading is having a positive impact. Lesson visits confirmed that teachers and other staff are more confident in their delivery. Careful monitoring informs individual support, which ensures that all pupils on the early reading programme are making progress. Many pupils are very proud of their progress and keen to read more. Older pupils who struggle with reading are also supported effectively now.

Leaders have invested significant time and effort in fostering a love of reading across the school. A programme of reading events throughout the year, often involving parents and carers, aims to make reading a part of everyday life for all pupils. This is beginning to have a positive impact.

There is now a clear curriculum plan for all subjects from Year 2 to Year 9. In each subject, teachers know what they should be teaching and when, and have access to a range of resources. This is a significant improvement since the last visit. However, there is more work to be done to ensure consistent implementation. For instance, there is variability in how well activities and resources are selected and adapted to meet the needs of the pupils in this school. Teachers do not yet have the confidence and skills to undertake this work without substantial support. You are aware of this, and training is due next term. It was notable during this visit that nearly all teachers spoken with were supportive of the changes taking place. However, some are feeling the strain of the greater demands and responsibilities on them. You are aware that staff will need time to develop and practise these new skills before taking responsibility for an aspect of curriculum planning.

There has been a significant change in the ethos of the school. Pupils are beginning to understand why they need to regulate their behaviour. The rewards system is a positive influence on this because pupils value the chance to see tangible outcomes for their efforts to behave well. Importantly, pupils are now recognising and valuing the way in which the school works for them and with them. They increasingly enjoy their learning and understand it as their pathway to an aspirational future. Consequently, they are now more willing to engage in their learning and this has led to calmer classrooms. Much of this is down to the personal development curriculum that has been put in place, which is supporting pupils to broaden their horizons and aspirations.

You have introduced 'Reward, Reflect, Review' sessions that take place at appropriate times in the day. These are enjoyed by most pupils. However, there is little structure to these and there is some confusion about the intended outcomes. This means that, in

practice, the sessions are not being used as well as they might. You are aware of this and know that the purpose needs to be clarified so that all staff know what is expected.

You know that your focus on developing and maintaining good learning behaviours is crucial in supporting pupils to achieve their potential. You monitor behaviour very closely to make sure that any peaks or patterns are rapidly identified and then addressed. You and other leaders work creatively to support individual pupils to manage their emotions and feelings. This work is particularly effective at supporting pupils with the most challenging behaviours. You and other leaders clearly recognise and respond well to pupils' all-round circumstances, including some of the significant challenges pupils experience outside school.

All leaders recognise the role of the school in supporting parents and families to help their children. You are aware that some parents feel that communication could be better. You have already taken steps to increase the ways in which parents can share in, and comment on, the school's work.

The school continues to receive support from another multi-academy trust as well as that received from Forward Education Trust. This is appropriately linked to improvement priorities and is helping you to move forward, providing an additional source of expertise.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the CEO or equivalent of the 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