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Dear Mr Dane

Special measures monitoring inspection of SGS Forest High School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 12 and 13 September 2023, 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 May 2022.

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, Frances Bywater, His Majesty's Inspector (HMI), and I discussed with you, the head of school and the interim chair of the multi-academy 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. We also carried out visits to lessons, held meetings with staff and pupils and reviewed school documentation, particularly relating to safeguarding and pupils' behaviour. 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 am of the opinion that the school may appoint early career teachers.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Since the previous monitoring inspection, an interim chair of the board of trustees has been appointed. A recruitment process is underway for a substantive chairperson. In addition, there have been changes to the senior leadership arrangements within the school. The role of the headteacher has been extended to include executive responsibilities across the trust. A newly appointed head of school provides day-to-day leadership on site, supported by a reorganised senior leadership team. During this inspection, I considered the impact of these changes on the school's capacity for continued improvement.

The school continues to provide pupils with a broad curriculum. Each subject has clear aims. There are agreed routines to help pupils to focus on and remember important curriculum points. Nevertheless, in some subjects there is a need to consider more carefully the order in which pupils learn the curriculum content. Some pupils have different starting points and yet curriculum planning does not always take this into account or consider the best sequence of learning. The school is determined to provide a high-quality, well-taught curriculum and is working to address the areas where it is less effective.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are benefitting from the stronger systems in place to support them. Pupils' needs are identified reliably. Increasingly, this means that pupils receive extra support through education, health and care plans. Nonetheless, there are occasions where pupils with SEND do not receive effective support. For example, where opportunities to discuss subject content are more limited, teaching does not pick up on insecure knowledge quickly.

The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is growing rapidly. The school is developing the necessary expertise to support this group of pupils. Pupils' English language skills are assessed precisely. This informs the English language teaching they receive from skilled staff. However, subject curriculums are not sufficiently well adapted to enable these pupils to learn the most important content.

Reading is a clear priority within the school. Pupils in Years 7 to 10 read widely and regularly. Those who have fallen behind with their reading are identified through precise assessments and receive help to catch up. For some, this includes a phonics curriculum. The school is developing a team of staff who are fully trained to support pupils in the earliest stages of reading.

Since the previous inspection, the school has introduced a new approach to managing pupils' behaviour. This has had considerable impact. Pupils and staff confirm that lessons are disrupted far less frequently. In particular, pupils who have struggled to manage their behaviour in the past are better equipped to do so due to clearer systems and expectations. The school has rightly identified the crucial role of good attendance in pupils achieving well. The school is having some early success in supporting pupils who have been persistently absent for extended periods back into school.

Where pupils have significant difficulty following the curriculum, the school makes arrangements for alternative provision. In such circumstances, the school continues to maintain an oversight of the attendance, safety and welfare of pupils. However, the school does not have a clear understanding of what pupils are learning. The school cannot demonstrate with confidence that pupils are receiving a suitably broad curriculum. Therefore, it was agreed to include a focus on this at the next monitoring inspection.

Throughout a period of significant leadership change, the school has maintained a sharp focus on improving pupils' behaviour and attendance because these are currently the aspects likely to make the most positive difference to pupils' experiences and achievements. Morale among staff is high. Staff have confidence in what the school does and describe notable improvements to their workload and well-being.

Those responsible for governance provide appropriate challenge and support to the school. The school is beginning to gather and analyse information about pupils' behaviour and attitudes more effectively. However, where systems have been recently implemented, such as the new approach to behaviour management, the school does not yet fully understand the causes of any patterns linked to different groups of pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair (interim) of the board of trustees of the South Gloucestershire and Stroud multi-academy trust, and the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for South Gloucestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Lydia Pride
His Majesty's Inspector