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Gopal Baria
Acting Principal
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Dear Mr Baria

Special measures monitoring inspection of Montsaye Academy

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 16 and 17 April 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 November 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, Paul Sweeney, Farhan Adam and Martin Fitzwilliam, Ofsted Inspectors, and I discussed with you and other senior leaders, trust officers, other staff, a trustee and members of the school executive board, 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 met members of staff, spoke to groups of pupils and met with subject leaders to review the subject curriculums. We also visited lessons, reviewed samples of pupils' work, observed break and lunchtimes, visited tutor sessions and reviewed parent and carers responses, including text comments to Ofsted Parent View. We reviewed the responses to the staff survey, reviewed the school's single central record and safeguarding records, and reviewed various documents, including a range of policies and the school's action plan. 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.

Safeguarding is effective.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Since the previous inspection, the substantive principal has left the school. Trustees of Pathfinder Schools trust appointed a temporary principal and senior vice-principal. Five new senior leaders took up posts at the start of this term. The trust, in recognising that it did not have capacity to improve the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection, immediately commissioned external support. The trust recognises that it does not have the capacity to provide effective internal support for the school. Trustees are working proactively with the Department for Education to transfer the school to a different academy trust. Since the previous inspection, the school recognises and values the highly effective and ongoing external support provided by the United Learning Trust.

The school's action plan for improvement clearly sets out the steps needed to build capacity and address the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection. Leaders, with external support, have rightly prioritised building sustainable leadership capacity, establishing a secure culture of safeguarding and improving pupils' behaviour and attendance. They have longer-term plans that set out actions to improve the quality of education, pupils' personal development and sixth-form provision. Leaders are strategic in planning for long-term improvement rather than unsustainable quick fixes.

The school has started to review its curriculum. This includes working with United Learning Trust officers to review the school's overall curriculum and many subject curriculums. Leaders welcome and appreciate this external support and challenge. The school has very recently increased leadership capacity to improve different aspects of the quality of education. There are clear focuses to develop more ambitious and progressive subject curriculums, to raise expectations of learning and to improve teaching for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school has invested in resources and training for staff to help those pupils who struggle to read. Initiatives to improve pupils' reading are yet to be fully embedded. The focus on improving the quality of education is in its early stages of development.

The school has rightly prioritised improving pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Leaders have reviewed the school's behaviour policy. New behavioural expectations have been set. The number of suspensions is beginning to fall, and the reflection room is used more purposefully. Truancy has been reduced significantly. Pupils are now in lessons, unless they have a valid reason, with a pass, for being elsewhere. The golden ticket reward system is appreciated by many pupils. However, the school's revised expectations and behaviour systems are not consistently used by all staff. Low-level disruption occurs in some lessons. The school's revised approach to behaviour has brought about

improvement. The approaches need further embedding to support the development of pupils' more positive attitudes to school and learning.

The school has developed a comprehensive approach to challenge and support parents and carers whose children do not attend as regularly as they should. The school's capacity and systems to support and challenge poor attendance have improved significantly. The impact of this is seen in the school having successfully stopped the decline in overall attendance. Punctuality is also improving. However, too many pupils do not attend as well as they should. Leaders are yet to fully embed the school's new approach to improve attendance.

Not as much improvement is seen yet within the school's provision for pupils' personal development and the sixth form. Long-term plans set out clear steps to improve both of these aspects. In the last five months, leaders have rightly prioritised the other recommendations set out in the previous inspection report.

The school has significantly improved the effectiveness of safeguarding since the previous inspection. Leaders make sure that the welfare and safety of pupils are key to their work. The school has ensured that leaders and staff receive appropriate training to understand their safeguarding responsibilities. Staff know what to do if they have any concerns about pupils' welfare. Safeguarding leaders know pupils very well. Leaders act quickly to support pupils and families when they need extra help. They work with a range of external agencies. There are strong systems in place to check pupils' welfare, including those pupils who attend alternative provisions. Safeguarding records are thorough and up to date. All of the required pre-employment checks are undertaken before adults start working with pupils. The necessary checks are recorded on the school's single central record.

Staff are optimistic and hopeful about the school's improvement. They recognise the changes as being steps in the right direction. Staff morale is much improved when compared with that of the previous inspection. Staff value the external support provided. Most staff are now proud to be working at this school.

The school is working closely with United Learning Trust. Leaders recognise the positive impact this external support is having. Leadership capacity and safeguarding have improved. The green shoots of improvement in pupils' behaviour and attendance are beginning to emerge. Trustees and officers of the Pathfinder Schools trust are working closely with United Learning Trust. There is a positive working relationship to secure the long-term improvement required.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the CEO of the Pathfinder Schools trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for North Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Davies
His Majesty's Inspector