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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Emma James
Headteacher
Birchensale Middle School
Bridley Moor Road
Redditch
Worcestershire
B97 6HT

Dear Mrs James

Special measures monitoring inspection of Birchensale Middle School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 24 and 25 June 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 third monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require special measures following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in September 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, Sukhbir Farar, Ofsted Inspector (OI), and I discussed with you and other senior leaders, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust, the deputy chief executive officer of the trust, other staff, trustees and governors 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, looked at samples of pupils' work, met with other staff, reviewed records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding and met with pupils, both formally and informally. A parent and carer survey, Ofsted Parent View, and Ofsted staff survey were also completed and results analysed. 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 is of the opinion that the school may appoint early career teachers.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

With the support of the trust, you have continued to refine and add capacity to your leadership to drive improvements in standards. The safeguarding team has been reorganised with increased coordination between schools in the trust. You have also added capacity to the pastoral team. With a change in the leadership of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), you have wasted no time in securing external support for this provision before a new leader takes her post. As agreed in the previous monitoring visit, provision for pupils with SEND was a particular focus for this visit.

With external support you have extensively reviewed the register for pupils with SEND. This is now complete and up to date. Reviews for pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans are almost complete. These have included increased emphasis on pupil and parent voice. Teaching assistants have had revised training on their roles and how to best support pupils with SEND. Staff now have clear information on adaptations to learning and support for pupils with SEND. All this means that pupils with SEND are increasingly learning the curriculum as you intend. This is more consistent in key stage 2, where they are typically taught by one teacher. In key stage 3, you recognise that there remain inconsistencies in how teachers use the information provided to them to adapt the learning for pupils.

The routines for learning which you have introduced have added clarity and structure to learning in the classroom. Alongside other developments to teaching, this means that pupils are learning more and remembering more over time. Again, this is more secure in key stage 2. In key stage 3, there remains variability and occasions when expectations for some pupils could be higher. You recognise these areas for development and are already working to secure further improvements.

You now have a comprehensive programme for pupils who need support with their reading, as well as to promote a wider culture of reading. This programme includes effective strategies to develop pupil comprehension and vocabulary, as well as dedicated reading lessons. You are tracking the impact of this carefully.

You and your senior leaders continue to monitor attendance closely and take prompt action when needed. This means that the improvements to pupil attendance have continued. Attendance is now at national levels thanks to your strategic approach. The attendance for more vulnerable pupils is not as high as the rest of the school, but this gap is closing thanks to the support you are putting in place, as well as wider improvements to provision. This is helping pupils to attend more regularly.

Thanks to clear leadership in this area, expectations around pupils' behaviour have continued to be embedded. You are tracking impact closely and although suspensions have not fallen, other measures show the positive changes in culture and pupil conduct.

You track the support for pupils to meet your expectations meticulously and make appropriate adjustments. You are, therefore, aware that some groups of more vulnerable pupils tend to be over-represented in this group. You are also aware of where there are inconsistencies in the application of your behaviour expectations. The school is typically calm and purposeful, both in lesson time and at social times.

Governors and trustees are well informed about improvements in provision and where further developments are needed. They regularly visit and review provision in the school. The trust has taken sensible and appropriate steps to secure the necessary improvements. They have used trust expertise appropriately to accelerate change. Staff are broadly positive about developments and improvements in provision. Leaders are mindful of staff workload.

You have restructured the safeguarding team. There remains significant expertise in this area and appropriate oversight. This means that pupils who are at risk have appropriate and prompt support. There is extensive liaison with external agencies, where this is necessary. You have ensured that staff have high levels of vigilance with respect to disclosures and they are knowledgeable about referral procedures. Pupils we spoke to say they feel safe and they understand who they would approach if they had worries. They are confident the school would act appropriately. An extensive external review of safeguarding provision has been undertaken and minor areas for development have already been acted on.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the CEO of the Bordesley Multi-Academy Trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Worcestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Madden
His Majesty's Inspector