

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



01 September 2023

Natascha Barrett
Headteacher
Hartcliffe Nursery School and Children's Centre
Hareclive Road
Hartcliffe
Bristol
BS13 0JW

Dear Natascha Barrett

Special measures monitoring inspection of Hartcliffe Nursery School and Children's Centre

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 3 and 4 July 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 June 2022.

During the inspection, Claire Mirams, Ofsted Inspector, and I discussed with you and other senior leaders, other staff, governors and representatives from the local authority 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, scrutinised the school development plan and looked at curriculum plans. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Hartcliffe Nursery School and Children's Centre remains inadequate and requires special measures. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the category of concern to be removed.

The school may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Since the monitoring visit in March 2023, the headteacher has returned from a period of absence and is due to retire at the end of term. Governors have appointed the curriculum lead, who was commissioned by the local authority to support the school, as the new headteacher from September 2023. The chair of governors has also resigned, with another governor stepping into the role.

During the inspection I focused on the actions that leaders had taken to address three of the key issues identified in the June 2022 inspection. Namely, that teaching did not meet children's needs, that children's behaviour was not well managed and that, without support, leaders did not have the capacity to improve the school. In addition, I also focused on safeguarding which was judged to be effective in the March 2023 monitoring visit.

Leaders have continued to work at pace to tackle the weaknesses addressed in the graded inspection. The incoming headteacher has worked closely with the current headteacher to ensure a smooth transition. Together, senior leaders have continued to review and adapt their action plans as necessary. The leadership structure of the school, which was unclear during the last monitoring visit, is now established. Leaders have decluttered the environment and redecorated so that it is more welcoming for all. They have launched a new website to help keep families better informed about what their child will learn and what events are taking place.

Leaders have continued to develop the curriculum. They have ensured it aligns closely with the early years foundation stage statutory framework. Leaders have stripped back curriculum plans which previously were too complicated. This has had some emerging successes, particularly for the 3- and 4-year-old provision. Leaders have identified what books children will read and when, so that they link to other areas of the curriculum. For example, the emphasis on 'core stories' means children learn familiar books well, such as 'The Hungry Caterpillar'. Teachers diligently check their understanding of the text.

However, the curriculum needs further refinement for 2-year-olds. Curriculum plans do not help support staff to implement the curriculum well. Staff are unclear on how learning builds over time. They require further training in child development so that they can plan activities that meet children's needs. Furthermore, the space for 2-year-olds is currently not sufficiently developed to meet the needs of children of this age.

Leaders have sustained the improvements in children's behaviour. For example, 'Welcome Time' is a nurturing and purposeful start to the day. This ensures that children are ready to learn. Staff have developed well-established routines which children follow. Leaders have changed systems for lunchtime so that children learn the importance of healthy eating. Staff promote nutritious hot meals. There is a calm and pleasant atmosphere at lunchtimes. Staff model how to use knives and forks.

Leaders have improved systems for the identification of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They liaise well with other agencies as part of this. Leaders have worked on improving targets in children's plans. However, this work is at an

early stage. While targets for pupils are appropriate, they are set over too long a period and are not specific enough. They do not inform teachers sharply enough about how to make adaptations to their teaching for children. Consequently, adaptations for pupils with SEND do not precisely meet their needs.

Governance has not made the same rate of progress as other areas. Governors recognise this. They have rightly prioritised securing leadership for the school. However, this has hampered their ability to make checks on the school's work. They have not yet conducted enough monitoring to assure themselves of the school's progress. There remains a lack of clarity about governors' roles for checking the progress of the school's action plan.

Staff say that morale has improved. They say the systems for children's routines are clearer and better understood. Leaders have handled the transition to the new headteacher well. Leaders listen to the views of staff. Staff say that leaders are approachable and will support them with any issues. Their pride in working at Hartcliffe is evident.

Safeguarding remains effective. Leaders have clarified systems for making checks on the school's single central record. Staff record any low-level concerns they have in a timely manner. However, they do not record follow up actions consistently. As a result, it is not clear what measures or actions staff have put in place following a concern.

The local authority continues to support the school well. They recognise the progress the school has made but also that the school still has key areas to improve, particularly for the youngest children. External support is set to continue for the new headteacher, and for other staff within the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Bristol. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Jason Edge
His Majesty's Inspector