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PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE USE

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Courtlands Special School – needs improvement and is getting it

Courtlands Special School has received an inadequate Ofsted judgement following an inspection on 5th-6th March 2024. The school is part of Transforming Futures Trust. The Trust has been driving improvement at Courtlands over the past year, and it is clear that the school is a safe place for children, progress is being made and Trust governance is sound. The Trust believes that the Ofsted report is inaccurate, not supported by evidence and has raised this directly with Ofsted.

The recent Ofsted report on 5th and 6th March is a very disappointing and challenging outcome for the school. The Trust acknowledges that Courtlands needs improvement and has been proactively addressing the underlying issues over the past year, implementing improvement plans and making substantial progress. In response to the inspection, the school and Trust have intensified their improvement plans to ensure rapid and sustainable changes at the school.

A new leadership team, under the direction of Executive Headteacher Mark Ruffett, has been established. With strong support from Trustees and the Trust's new CEO, along with the confidence of the Local Authority, the future trajectory for Courtlands School is positive.

The Trust had recognised the difficulties at Courtlands School well before the inspection and had been working closely with the school and the Local Authority to implement necessary changes. Trustees had received a number of reports from senior ex-Ofsted inspectors, Plymouth City Council and staff within the Trust and these showed Courtlands needed improvement but was far from inadequate.

Trustees and staff are committed to ensuring that Courtlands School remains a safe and secure environment. The governance framework is robust, enabling Trustees to stay well informed about the school's progress and ensure that improvements are effectively implemented.

In summary:

- **The school is a safe and secure place** and has had additional external validation to support this.
- **All actions are being and will be taken to ensure effective progress and change is made** and there is a clear plan in place which is currently being implemented to ensure rapid improvement in all areas of concern.
- **Pupils are being effectively supported** and making positive progress.

- **A new leadership team has been in place since Easter**, with a new Executive Headteacher and the school is already driving the change that is needed.
- **Additional investment is being provided by the Trust to support improvements to the buildings, infrastructure and training** to ensure the capacity to undertake all necessary actions now and moving forward.
- **A governance review and further external safeguarding review have been commissioned by the Trust**, in addition to what has already been carried out, to ensure nothing is missed and all possible actions are being taken.

The school and Trust understand that this is a worrying time for parents who will understandably have their concerns and questions. The school will be working with them to provide direct assurance about the positive changes and actions in place and involve them in the improvement journey of the school.

Dr Clive Grace, O.B.E., Chair of Transforming Futures Multi-Academy Trust said: “There are three key points to address. Firstly, Courtlands needs improvement, and has done for some time. Secondly, we have made notable progress on that over the past year. We are determined to get the school to a good and better standard, and we have the team in place to achieve that. Lastly, whilst not agreeing with the judgement of the report, which we believe is not supported by the evidence, we will be relentlessly focussing on driving further improvements”.

Matt Sambrook, CEO, said: “Courtlands school have a new leadership team, a clear plan, and the full support of both the Trust and the Local Authority in the work they are doing to ensure that all identified issues are fully addressed, and the school makes the rapid change and improvement that will make it a school to be proud of.”

Mark Ruffett, new Executive Head of Courtlands School, said: “We have a skilled and passionate staff team who are committed to providing the best possible offer to all pupils. Improvements to provision have already been made and we have a clear plan to ensure this continues.”

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