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Alan Wilkinson
Principal
Tudor Grange Samworth Academy, A Church of England School
50 Trenant Road
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Leicestershire
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Dear Mr Wilkinson

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Tudor Grange Samworth Academy, A Church of England School

Following my visit with Peter Monk, Ofsted Inspector, Steve Lewis, Ofsted Inspector, and Sue Vasey, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 3 and 4 December 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in October 2018. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's action plans are fit for purpose.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Leicester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Tordoff
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in October 2018.

- Improve the quality of teaching and thereby pupils' outcomes, particularly for boys, the disadvantaged and the most able, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - appropriately pitch learning to meet the needs of pupils
 - consistently follow the school's agreed assessment policy
 - learn from, and then use, the school's best practice to raise expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - provide pupils with appropriate challenge to help them to progress as they should.
- Improve the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) so that they attend school regularly and make the progress they are capable of.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management through more considered use of the funding for those pupils who are disadvantaged or pupils with SEND and then review the impact of this funding.
- Increase the attendance of those pupils who are persistently absent.
- Improve the quality of teaching in the early years and thereby increase the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development by ensuring that:
 - assessment information informs the next steps for children across all areas of learning
 - all adults within the provision are focused on children's learning.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 3 and 4 December 2019

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documents. They considered the school's primary and secondary phase action plans, and the trust's statement of action.

Inspectors met with senior leaders, subject leaders, groups of primary and secondary teachers and a group of support staff. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead. She held meetings with a trustee, who is also the chair of the local governing body, and the trust's chief executive officer.

Inspectors visited lessons with senior leaders and checked the quality of pupils' work. They met with three groups of pupils and other pupils individually. They spoke with pupils informally during social times.

Inspectors spoke with parents and carers at the start of the school day.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been some changes to the school's leadership. In May 2019, a new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) was appointed. In September 2019, two new senior leaders were appointed from the existing staff team. One leader is responsible for the curriculum. The other leader oversees pupils' achievements and the use of the pupil premium funding.

The leader responsible for geography in key stages 3 and 4 left the school in August 2019. There have been new internal appointments of subject leaders in key stage 2 for English, and in key stages 2 and 3 for mathematics.

The progress made by the school in tackling the key areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection

Leaders' actions are having a positive impact on the quality of education. They have been successful in filling staff vacancies so that there has been more consistency within the staff team. They have ensured that most secondary teachers are subject experts. Leaders have reviewed what is taught with subject leaders at key stages 3 and 4. They know which subjects have a well-planned curriculum that builds on pupils' previous knowledge, for instance in English, science and mathematics. Some subject leaders need more help to design a curriculum that follows a logical sequence. These subject leaders are supported by subject specialists from the trust. Over the course of two years, some key stage 3 subjects meet the requirements of the national curriculum.

In the primary phase, leaders have worked hard to improve subjects other than

English and mathematics. In each case, new subject leaders are checking that the curriculum helps pupils to know and remember more. For example, as part of 'art week', inspectors saw pupils in different year groups use the knowledge and skills they had already gained to create artwork focused on protecting the environment. Leaders are beginning to think about how to plan a curriculum that is coherent across each school phase, starting with the early years. This is in its early stages in some subjects, such as mathematics.

Leaders have shared with all staff their view of what successful learning looks like. Teachers know what leaders expect them to include when they are planning pupils' activities. Teachers with different strengths and weaknesses work together to share good practice. Those who are new to the profession appreciate this extra help. This support helps most teachers to improve their practice.

Previously, some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have been too low. This has begun to change. Most teachers use their strong subject knowledge to help pupils understand increasingly demanding work. They give pupils lots of chances to recall important knowledge. As one pupil explained, by doing this often, 'You are more likely to remember it in the next lesson or in an exam.' If pupils are absent from a lesson, teachers provide support to help them to catch up.

Teachers tell pupils how they can improve their work. For example, teachers have had training on how to show pupils what a good answer looks like. At key points, pupils reflect on their learning and think about how they can get better. Some teachers are skilled at checking pupils' understanding. However, others are not. They do not always make sure that pupils have a thorough knowledge and understanding before moving on to new content.

In 2019, the achievements of Year 11 and Year 6 pupils improved, including in English and mathematics. However, pupils still do not achieve well enough, due to the legacy of a previously poor quality of education.

Leaders understand how important it is for pupils to read well. Adults are well-trained in teaching pupils how to use phonics (letters and the sounds they represent). In 2019, more pupils achieved well in the phonics screening check than previously. However, some pupils do not always use their skills to decode words they do not know. Their reading books are not always matched closely enough to the phonics knowledge they already have. They find reading some of these books too difficult.

Leaders have improved the quality of the support for pupils with SEND. The new SENCo is knowledgeable. Together with teachers, he spots pupils with SEND early and identifies what they find difficult. The SENCo checks that pupils with SEND get appropriate help, particularly for those pupils with an education, health and care plan (EHCP). Leaders give pupils with SEND in Years 7 and 8 extra help with their literacy and numeracy, for example through 'access classes'. One pupil commented

that in these lessons, 'You can express your ideas better.'

Pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as other pupils. The SENCo provides teachers with training, as well as information about the individual needs of pupils with SEND. Some, but not all, teachers use this information to plan an appropriate curriculum for these pupils. Teaching assistants are getting better at supporting these pupils, particularly in the primary classes. The extra help they give improves these pupils' confidence. Leaders' expectations and ambitions for these pupils are the same as for all pupils. They want them to achieve and be successful.

Leaders have detailed spending plans to show how the extra money received for disadvantaged pupils is used. They make sure that everyone knows what they are responsible for within these plans. Some actions are already having an impact. For example, leaders encourage teachers to think about disadvantaged pupils' needs first when planning an activity. Leaders have implemented some strategies more recently. It is too soon to judge whether these strategies are supporting disadvantaged pupils well enough.

Pupils' attendance has improved, including the attendance of pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. Fewer pupils are regularly absent from school. These improvements have been most noticeable since the beginning of this academic year. Leaders check pupils' attendance carefully. They work closely with parents to help them understand why it is important for their children to come to school every day. Leaders know there is more work to do to make sure that attendance continues to get better, particularly the attendance of older pupils.

The behaviour of most pupils has improved. Relationships between pupils and adults are respectful and positive. Teachers set out clear classroom routines for pupils to follow. Pupils know what their teachers expect of them and they focus well on their learning. They have a growing sense of pride in the school.

In the early years, leaders have trained adults well. Adults understand how the curriculum is planned. They work closely with the children to encourage their language skills and support their learning. Adults know how to observe the children and identify when they have moved on to the next stage in their development. They make sure that this information is used to plan appropriate activities for children's next steps. Children are proud of their work and they are keen to share what they have learned with others. In 2019, more children achieved a good level of development than in previous years.

The effectiveness of leadership and management at the school

Leaders have a more joined-up approach to helping disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND than in the past. They have clear systems and processes in place to make sure that they know whether their actions are helping these pupils to be more successful.

Trustees and governors check closely on leaders' use of extra funding to help disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. For example, the governor responsible for the pupil premium has discussed with leaders whether last year's strategies to help disadvantaged pupils should continue or not. At a trust level, the impact of leaders' support for pupils with SEND and for disadvantaged pupils is discussed regularly at 'team around the school' meetings.

Leaders are ambitious for the pupils. They have plans in place to improve other areas of the school that need to get better. These include changes to the curriculum, including the removal of the two-year key stage 3, and improving the programme for pupils' personal development.

The chair of the local governing body, who is also a trustee, is experienced. She has trained other governors to improve their knowledge and skills, so that they can provide leaders with support and challenge. Governors are conscious of the importance of staff's well-being and consider staff's workload. They ensure that any changes made by leaders do not put staff under unnecessary pressure.

Trust leaders have an accurate and realistic understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They support leaders and provide training that focuses on what staff need. Trust leaders challenge leaders on their plans for improvement. They make sure that leaders' plans are as precise and focused as possible. Trust leaders know that there is more work to do to reduce the variability in the quality of education. They are committed to improving the school.

Pupils feel safe in school. They know how to reduce any risks they may face online or in their local area. For instance, pupils explained to an inspector how they had found an assembly about knife crime helpful. Staff are well trained and know how to spot if a pupil is at risk of harm. They appreciate the advice they receive from the designated safeguarding lead, for example about incidents in the news that might affect pupils. Leaders keep detailed records of any concerns they have about a pupil. They work closely with other organisations if a pupil needs extra help. Leaders carry out appropriate checks to confirm that staff are safe to work with pupils. The trust checks that leaders' safeguarding practices and procedures are suitable.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Leaders know what needs to get better. They have realistic plans in place to bring about the improvements necessary.
- The quality of support for pupils with SEND is beginning to improve.
- Leaders have improved pupils' attendance, including for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. Pupils understand that it is important to attend school every

day.

- Teachers have more opportunities to share good practice. This helps them to improve the quality and sequencing of the curriculum in some subjects.
- Pupils know how to improve their work. They know what is expected of them. They want to achieve well.
- In the early years, adults use assessment well to move children to the next stage in their development.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- In some subjects, the curriculum is not planned well enough so that pupils know and remember more.
- Leaders have implemented some of the strategies to support disadvantaged pupils only very recently. It is too soon to judge whether these strategies will have a positive impact on the quality of education for these pupils.
- Some teachers do not check that pupils fully understand the work before they move on to new learning.

External support

After the previous inspection, leaders sought advice about how to support disadvantaged pupils more effectively. They appointed an external advisor to review the effectiveness of the spending of the pupil premium funding. In response to these recommendations, leaders have implemented new strategies to support these pupils.