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Katherine Coates
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Dear Mrs K Coates

Special measures monitoring inspection of Kingsfield Primary School

Following my visit with Fyfe Johnston and Marc White, Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), to your school on 5 and 6 May 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the 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 became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in November 2019. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the 2020-21 COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

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

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Mellors
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 05 May 2021 and 06 May 2021

Context

Since the previous full inspection, carried out in November 2019, there have been significant changes in senior posts. The headteacher took up position in September 2020. An assistant headteacher joined the school in April 2020 as the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). Another senior leader has now returned to her role following a period of leave.

There have also been changes in staffing. Four members of staff have left the school and leaders are using supply teachers to cover the vacancies. Leaders have also appointed a specialist intervention teacher to provide additional capacity to the teaching staff.

The interim executive board (IEB) continues to provide governance to the school. The IEB is chaired by the trust's chief executive officer (CEO).

At the time of the inspection, a small number of pupils were self-isolating. These pupils are receiving education remotely which is in line with the remote education offer.

The partial closure of schools owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and staffing instability, has delayed some of the school's plans, most notably in regard to the implementation of the curriculum.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Since the headteacher's appointment, she and senior leaders have wasted no time in addressing the weaknesses in the curriculum identified in the previous full inspection. Curriculum plans have now been written for every subject. The plans identify the important things pupils need to know, building their knowledge systematically. Teachers have contributed to the curriculum plans. They are working in teams to ensure that the curriculum's plans include key threads of learning. As a result, subject plans reflect a clear vision for successful learning at Kingsfield Primary School.

Where the curriculum is developing most effectively, subject leaders and teachers have a strong understanding of how to deliver these subject plans to pupils. In some subjects, such as mathematics, leaders are adapting plans to address gaps in pupils' knowledge in a meaningful and effective way. This is not the case in all subjects.

Not all teachers have a secure understanding of the subjects they teach, and some subject leadership is less well established. Not all subject leaders are ensuring that

teachers are confident in adapting curriculum plans so that pupils learn well. The checking of pupils' understanding is used effectively by some teachers to address misconceptions but not by others. Consequently, teachers are not implementing leaders' curriculum plans consistently. Pupils do not have a secure grasp of the key concepts they need to know, which hinders their progress. Leaders are identifying and tackling any weaknesses in teachers' approaches to delivering the curriculum. This work has been slowed in recent months by staffing changes and periods of partial closure owing to COVID-19.

Leaders' new approaches to teaching early reading and phonics are not well embedded, especially for pupils who need help to catch up in their reading. Leaders have ensured that pupils read books that are matched to the sounds that they know. However, not all adults understand how to use strategies that build pupils' phonic knowledge successfully. Adults do not systematically check that pupils are using pure sounds when pupils read. Pupils who find reading difficult do not receive timely help. These pupils are not catching up quickly with their peers.

Leaders are developing pupils' love of reading. The refurbishment of the library sends a clear message about the importance of reading. The Kingsfield reading map includes high-quality texts that pupils will read before they leave the school. Book corners in every classroom provide pupils with a wider selection of reading materials that are used well by pupils. Pupils told inspectors about their favourite authors. Reading challenges set by teachers is helping to motivate them to read more often.

The SENCo has established effective systems for identifying the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The SENCo provides specific training to help teachers to develop a better understanding of pupils' needs. However, teachers are not routinely ensuring that they use this information so that pupils with SEND access the curriculum consistently well across subjects.

The curriculum for early education is underdeveloped. Despite positive relationships and recent improvements in the learning environment, there are a number of weaknesses in the provision for the very youngest children. For example, teachers do not use what they know about each child, to plan effective learning activities or use questioning well during these activities. Children are not making the progress of which they are capable, especially in their speaking and listening skills and are not well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Since arriving, the headteacher has acted promptly to improve pupils' behaviour. She and her team have set high expectations and have clear systems for encouraging pupils to behave well. Classrooms are calm and there is a purposeful learning ethos. Pupils follow adults' instructions and pay close attention when their teachers are speaking. Pupils who spoke to inspectors, thought that their teachers were the best thing about Kingsfield Primary School. On occasions when pupils become distracted, this is often because teachers do not plan activities that meet their needs.

Leaders have ensured that staff are receiving training that is tailored to their professional development. Staff are generally very supportive of the leadership team. They consider that a team approach is helping to improve the school. Staff say that leaders do consider their workload and that there is always an open door should they need to share any concerns. The trust is proactive in supporting staff and has dedicated teams to support staff well-being.

The IEB uses its expertise well to support and hold school leaders to account. Members of the IEB gather information from a range of sources, so that their questioning focuses on the important things. This ensures that leaders are tackling the right priorities that will help the school to improve quickly.

Priorities for further improvement:

- The curriculum plans for the early years are not fully developed. Teachers do not understand how to plan activities that builds children's learning sequentially. As a result, children do not make sufficient progress, especially in their communication and language development. Children are not prepared well for their next stage of education. Leaders must ensure that staff receive guidance and training about how children learn. Leaders need to plan the early years curriculum so that it supports children's subsequent learning through the rest of the school.

Additional support

The trust continues to check the school's progress through the IEB. It holds leaders to account to ensure that the quality of education is improving. The trust provides practical support which is helping in the refurbishment of the school building. Subject leaders and teachers benefit from the shared expertise from other schools within the trust as well as the support from a local teaching school. This is helping to secure their understanding about teaching a high-quality curriculum. Leaders make careful consideration of any support they are offered, ensuring that it is adapted to meet the school's context and requirements.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the assistant headteachers, one of who is the SENCo, subject leaders, teachers and other staff. We also spoke to the multi-academy trust chief executive officer and the director of education for the trust.

We looked at 79 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 29 free-text responses. We also considered 37 responses to Ofsted's online staff

questionnaire. We spoke to a range of pupils about their education. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.