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10 June 2021

Motiur Rahman
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Rahman

Special measures monitoring inspection of Sprites Primary Academy

Following my visit with Tessa Holledge, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), and Charlie Fordham, HMI, to your school on 11 and 12 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 October 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 COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. We discussed the impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in our 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 action 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 Reach2 multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Webb
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 11 and 12 May 2021

Context

Since the previous inspection in October 2019, there have been changes to leadership, governance and staff. You joined the school in January 2020. The associate leader joined in March 2020. The deputy headteacher left the school in April 2021.

In April 2020, five teachers joined the school. In March 2021, four of these teachers were appointed as phase leaders, leading and managing staff in early years and across two year groups. In March 2021, a special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) was also appointed.

The trust disbanded the local governing body prior to the previous inspection. An intervention board is in place, providing governance to the school. The current chair of the intervention board joined the governors in October 2019 and became chair in December 2019.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Immediately after the previous inspection, the school improved slowly. Initial leadership changes resulted in upheaval and uncertainty. Following the appointment of the current headteacher and associate school leader, the school has made better progress. Senior leaders have an accurate and realistic view of the school's current provision. There have been improvements in all the areas that were identified in the previous inspection report. Some aspects are more developed than others. For example, pupils' behaviour and the reading curriculum are further ahead in their development than the curriculum in other subjects, including writing and mathematics.

There is a purposeful atmosphere throughout the school. Senior leaders have created a positive team spirit. This has led to closer working relationships between leaders and staff. Staff feel well supported. Across the whole team morale is strong. Teaching staff have raised their expectations of what pupils can achieve, how pupils should present their work and pupils' attitudes to learning. Generally, pupils are keen to learn.

Middle leaders, referred to as phase leaders, have been appointed to strengthen leadership. They are currently receiving training to carry out their roles and responsibilities. This includes supporting teachers in delivering the curriculum effectively and monitoring the quality of education. This work is in its infancy. Some aspects have been paused due to the pandemic. It is too early to see if phase leaders' actions are improving the quality of education.

Senior leaders have very recently set up curriculum leadership teams for each subject. The intention is for the teachers in these teams to monitor the quality of teaching plans for the subject they lead. They intend to check how these are delivered by teachers and make sure pupils learn effectively. The curriculum leadership teams are led by phase leaders. They plan to model effective leadership to less experienced and less confident teachers in their team.

The recently appointed SENCo understands her role and responsibilities. She has identified the right priorities for improvement. She is beginning to address these. Teaching staff are being trained to identify pupils who may have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They provide the support these pupils need to achieve well. The SENCo has met with the parents of pupils with SEND. Information has been shared about the support given to their children and how this will help them to succeed.

Governance is strengthening. The chair of the intervention board brings experience and expertise to the role. She has a school improvement role in another local authority. She has introduced a more rigorous approach to monitoring the impact of leaders' actions. Members of the intervention board visit the school. They talk with leaders and staff to check for themselves how the school is improving. Consequently, members now have a more accurate and informed view of the school's effectiveness.

Senior leaders have placed great emphasis on improving the curriculum, including in early years. Leaders have developed curriculum plans that attempt to identify the content to be taught in each subject and for every year group. However, these plans are not consistent and clear. They do not set out, in order, what teachers will teach and when, so that pupils can build on their knowledge, skills and understanding over time. Nor do these plans support those teachers whose subject knowledge is weak. This results in inconsistent teaching across subjects and year groups. Consequently, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Leaders have established a well-organised curriculum for teaching early reading, including phonics. All staff have received training to deliver the phonics programme consistently and with continuity from Reception to Year 2. Leaders have made sure that the books children read match the sounds that they know. Leaders ensure that any pupils falling behind get the help they need so that they can catch up quickly. The number of pupils who require additional support is reducing. Leaders have purchased a range of high-quality texts to support the reading curriculum in all year groups. Leaders have planned the reading curriculum for pupils in Year 3 to Year 6 and, following training, teachers are now delivering this in lessons. However, the reading curriculum for older pupils is at an early stage of implementation. Leaders have not yet checked that it is taught consistently and supporting pupils in becoming confident and effective readers.

Leaders have prioritised tackling poor behaviour. There is now a clear, whole-school approach to managing pupils' behaviour that staff and most pupils follow. As a result, pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school is improving. Pupils say that their classes are calmer and that they can concentrate on their learning. However, pupils' behaviour during breaktimes can be overly boisterous. Some pupils told us that they do not feel safe when they are playing outside.

Leaders have developed a clear and ambitious vision based on high aspirations for all pupils. Leaders and staff encourage pupils to be confident, think for themselves and be 'fearless'. Leaders have ensured that the school values 'safe, polite, aspirational' are shared and understood by staff, pupils and parents alike. Pupils are cheerful, well-mannered and friendly. They were keen to introduce themselves to inspectors and help guide us around the school.

Senior leaders have worked hard to develop stronger links with parents. They meet with parents regularly to explain the improvements that are being made. Senior leaders organise discussions and surveys to find out the views of parents and whether leaders' actions are making a difference. Leaders act on any concerns raised.

There is a detailed plan in place to improve the school. Actions link directly to the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Leaders have prioritised these appropriately. Using support from the trust, senior leaders have provided high-quality training for middle leaders and staff. The intervention board holds leaders to account to ensure that the school continues to improve. Governors are mindful of the workload for leaders and staff. They check their well-being regularly.

Additional support

Since the previous inspection, the trust has provided, or brokered, intensive support for the school. For example, the trust has provided training for phase leaders and led the development of the reading curriculum across the school. This support has placed the school on a firmer footing to continue to improve.

Leaders have made effective use of support from the Department for Education English Hub. Teachers and teaching assistants have received phonics training to deliver leaders' chosen phonics programme. The school has also benefited from sharing best practice with other schools within the trust.

Evidence

Inspectors met with the headteacher, associate leader (who is also the designated safeguarding lead), phase leaders, teachers, the SENCo and school business manager. The lead inspector met with the chair of the intervention board and representatives from the trust. Inspectors visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and

observed pupils reading with staff. Inspectors talked to pupils about their learning and their views of the school.

Inspectors also scrutinised the school's website, curriculum plans, teaching resources, and documents related to governance. The lead inspector looked at the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 29 free-text responses, and reviewed the 39 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire. Inspectors spoke to some parents at the beginning of the school day and during the inspection.