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14 June 2021

Nanaki Bajwa  
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Dear Mrs Bajwa

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Nansen Primary School**

Following my visit with Eve Morris, Ian Tustian, Peter Humphries and Lesley Yates, Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), to your school on 19 and 20 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 September 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 education advisory board, the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of Leigh Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Heather Simpson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 19 May and 20 May 2021**

### **Context**

The school's rate of improvement slowed down because COVID-19 led to lots of 'bubble' closures and disruption to curriculum delivery and training over the last year. Initially, staff were nervous about teaching online during lockdowns as they lacked technical skills. However, their confidence increased as they became familiar with delivering remote education. Restrictions meant that all staff training had to be carried out remotely. Leaders state that this has been less effective than face-to-face training. Staff were also anxious about returning to school, but leaders have put systems in place to ensure staff feel safe and protected.

COVID-19 has also had, and continues to have, some impact on pupils' attendance. Several pupils remain stranded abroad and unable to return. Some parents are still nervous about sending their children to school regularly.

There have been some significant staff changes since the section 5 inspection in September 2019. An acting headteacher was appointed in October 2019 and was subsequently appointed as permanent headteacher in February 2021. Only three of the original eight senior leadership team remain in post at this time: one deputy headteacher and two assistant headteachers. A new senior leader has joined the school and is temporarily overseeing inclusion, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. A deputy and assistant headteacher will be seconded, from within the trust, to support the school after May half term. Eight class teachers have left the school and new staff have joined. The school was re-brokered to Leigh Trust in April 2020. In October 2020, the trust disbanded the governing body and replaced it with an Education Advisory Board (EAB) to support and challenge the school.

### **The progress made towards the removal of special measures**

Leaders have set out an ambitious vision for the school which they have shared widely with staff. Leaders are not afraid to tackle underperformance to achieve high-quality education. They have taken appropriate action to address some of the areas identified in the previous section 5 report. They are working hard to improve curriculum design and delivery to raise the quality of education for all pupils.

A strength in securing school improvement has been the drive, ambition and determination of the headteacher and executive headteacher to raise standards and improve the quality of education. Honest and realistic self-evaluation, together with sharp and incisive improvement planning, ensures that leaders do not waiver from their goal. Leaders know that improving teachers' subject knowledge, including in the early years, is now the key priority. This tier of leadership is stable and effective. However, ongoing mobility and changes in roles in other senior and subject leadership positions have impinged on the momentum of success. That said, leaders have made some recent appointments of skilled and experienced staff. Although

new to post, these staff have quickly audited their areas of responsibility and are rapidly implementing any changes needed.

Leaders have rightly prioritised English and mathematics since September 2019. Consequently, planning and assessment are more developed in reading, writing and mathematics than other subjects. Pupils are showing the ability to do more and remember more where well-structured and sequenced programmes of work have been introduced, for example in phonics and mathematics.

Leaders have introduced a phonic scheme to improve early reading. Reading leaders have received training from an external consultant and half-termly development days from the trust. This has provided them with the skills and knowledge needed to lead and monitor reading in their respective phases effectively. All staff, including support staff, have received phonics training. Pupils read daily in school and many read to family members at home. There has been notable improvement in reading provision, particularly in phonics at key stage 1. However, the lowest 20% of pupils who struggle with their reading only read to a member of staff once a week. This is not sufficient to help them catch up and develop their fluency and expression skills.

In other subjects, structure and sequencing are not as well developed as they should be. This means that pupils are unable to make links and draw on prior learning, including in the early years. Subjects such as physical education, geography and science are developing, but design technology, French, religious education and personal, social and health education remain at a very early stage. Leaders are aware of shortcomings in teachers' subject knowledge. However, the trust and senior leaders remain too focused on judging the quality of teaching of individuals rather than on overall curriculum development. Leaders should ensure they concentrate on training for staff in all curriculum subjects rather than on individual weaknesses in teaching.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils is still at an early stage of development but improving. Pupils are now accurately identified and receive additional adult support and interventions, particularly with their reading. However, leaders' monitoring of the impact of interventions needs further development. New leaders overseeing both provision for pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils are ambitious for pupils. Leaders have reviewed how they use funding for these pupils. The EAB offers appropriate challenge and holds leaders to account. Pupil premium funding is used to broaden pupils' experiences. However, this has understandably been impacted by COVID-19 this year.

The executive headteacher took firm action to improve pupils' behaviour following the previous inspection. The policy was revised and behaviour management systems updated. Pupils are now much better engaged in lessons due to improvements made to the curriculum and a greater emphasis placed on active participation. Parents and pupils told inspectors that behaviour is much improved. Leaders have

also focused on attendance. While improving, persistent absence remains too high and impedes the progress that pupils make. The pandemic has not helped this. Some families are reluctant to send their children to school due to anxiety about the virus. Nevertheless, leaders are working hard to improve attendance and have had some success to date with individual pupils.

Enrichment and development of pupils' cultural knowledge are now planned within the curriculum, with visits to art galleries and museums and learning about key historic people incorporated into the relevant subjects. Pupils also learn to play a musical instrument and visit different places of worship. Residential visits and clubs are beginning to be reintroduced. Nevertheless, this aspect of personal development has been slowed down by the COVID-19 restrictions imposed in the last year.

Extensive training has been provided for staff to aid their professional development. For example, 'active learning' training and input from a specialist art consultant has helped staff sharpen their behaviour management and subject knowledge. Leaders have taken steps to reduce staff workload. For example, assessment collection periods have reduced from six to three times per year. Support staff are involved in an administrative role to release teachers from this element. Leaders are also mindful of staff well-being. Staff report that the headteacher is very approachable and appreciated her ongoing contact during the national lockdowns.

The creation of the EAB has sharpened the focus on school improvement. Members recognise that curriculum development is still at a very early stage. To this end, staff are given shared planning, preparation and assessment time on Friday afternoons when pupils go home. Trust leaders have agreed to reassess this arrangement and its effectiveness. They agree that pupils have lost valuable time in school already this year and additional effort is needed to help pupils catch up.

### **Additional support**

The trust provides good levels of support and challenge. Members are based on the school site so have direct overview of the culture and operation of the school. Teaching and learning reviews are used to check progress towards the actions identified for improvement. As a result, members have an accurate picture of the school's position. Regular training is also provided for staff and leaders by the trust's teaching and learning leader. This is helping subject leaders to carry out their roles more effectively.

School leaders value and make good use of other support provided by external partners, for example subject input in reading and art, together with a review of the early years. They work closely with the local cluster of schools and teaching alliance to gather ideas and learn from good practice.

## **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents. They met with the executive headteacher and headteacher, other senior leaders and subject leaders, the multi-academy trust board and the EAB. Inspectors spoke with pupils, staff, and parents. The staff and parent surveys for Ofsted were also considered.