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15 June 2021

Neil Harris
St Mary's Catholic Primary School (Maltby)
Muglet Lane
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Dear Mr Harris

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School (Maltby)

Following my visit with Chris Cook, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 13 and 14 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 February 2020. 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. 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 not 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 strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the director of education for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hallam, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Rotherham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Marcus Newby
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 13 May 2021 and 14 May 2021

Context

Prior to March 2020, leaders had begun the process of reviewing the school's curriculum plans. This work was delayed due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. Support from specialist leaders of education (SLEs) and a local English hub was postponed because of the national restrictions.

Since the inspection, which placed the school into special measures in February 2020, there have been changes in the key staff at the school. The substantive headteacher returned to his post and a new early years lead has been appointed. Two further teachers resigned and have been replaced by new staff members. The school's business manager and an administrator are new to their posts following the resignation of previous postholders. Three teaching assistants left the school and new teaching assistants were appointed. Two staff governors, two foundation governors and a parent governor have left the governing body. A new staff governor has joined the governing body. The governing body and the diocese are in the final stages of rebrokering the school to a newly created multi-academy trust.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Although leaders have prioritised many of the areas identified in the previous inspection, they are not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures. The absence of key leaders at the start of this work and the impact of the pandemic have delayed and stunted the effectiveness of leaders' actions.

Leaders did not fully consider the educational detriment of closing the school to pupils on a Friday afternoon. Leaders' rationale for doing this was to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 and to allow for further staff training and planning, preparation and assessment time. Although leaders attempted to mitigate lost teaching time, this was unsuccessful. Pupils who had fallen behind due to historically poor teaching and the impact of lost learning time due to the national restrictions have been further hindered. Leaders must act promptly to reinstate this entitlement.

Leaders have worked effectively with SLEs to improve teaching in English and the early years. Conversely, leaders' plans for subjects such as science, history and geography are in their infancy. Plans for design technology remain undeveloped. There has been greater progress in the delivery of art. In this subject, plans are ambitious, and pupils are knowledgeable, recalling recent learning with ease. However, as with all subjects in the wider curriculum, there is insufficient time for pupils to know more and remember more. This is because leaders have reduced teaching time and because subjects are not studied regularly enough or for sufficient lengths of time.

Leaders have started to self-evaluate the school's emerging strengths and weaknesses. They have been proactive in commissioning a review of governance and have been supported by the local authority with their work in supporting pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities. In order to improve the school, leaders must continue to work on the outstanding areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection alongside their own newly identified priorities.

Leaders have taken action to improve some aspects of the school's work. The teaching of handwriting is now better sequenced, and teachers follow these plans. Pupils' books show they take pride in their work and there is a clear effort to improve presentation. Leaders have worked to develop the English curriculum. The school's recently implemented mastery approach means that pupils develop their writing skills over a range of contexts. They are then able to demonstrate their abilities by writing at length.

Leaders have created an effective system for the review of risk assessments. Well-considered and robust risk assessments are now in place across the site.

Leaders have developed the early years curriculum. They have thought carefully about the knowledge and skills that children need in order to be ready for Year 1. Assessment systems are now simple but effective. They are effective in the planning of next steps for children's learning. Leaders are now clear that the quality of the early years is enhanced by well-considered professional development for all staff.

At the time of the previous inspection, the teaching of phonics was not consistent and, as a result, not all pupils made good progress in learning to read. In order to improve this, leaders have worked with specialist teachers from a local English hub. Leaders now ensure that all teachers follow plans closely. The SLEs and subject leads are beginning to foster a culture of professional development in the school.

Leaders have recently placed a high profile on reading in the school. They say that being able to read 'opens a gateway to the future'. Adults and pupils speak with enthusiasm about books. Pupils especially look forward to 'first chapter Friday' when teachers read the first chapter of a book. Copies of these books are then made available for all pupils to access.

Following an external review of governance, a comprehensive action plan was written. Governors evaluate this working document regularly. Governors now work more strategically to evaluate the effectiveness of the school. As an example, specific governors have been linked with subject leads to gain further understanding of aspects of the curriculum.

Additional support

The school has been subject to support from the local authority and the diocese of Hallam. These partners have commissioned national leaders of education, SLEs and consultants. A local English hub has provided support to improve the teaching of early reading and phonics. There is fledgling evidence that this is having a positive impact. Leaders must continue to engage with these partners. This will further improve teachers' skills.

Evidence

During the inspection, inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, pupils, staff, representatives of those responsible for governance and representatives of the diocese of Hallam. The lead inspector held a video call with a representative of the local authority.

Inspectors scrutinised documents, including the school's improvement plan, minutes from governors' meetings, behaviour and attendance records, risk assessments, timetables and curriculum plans. We considered responses to Ofsted's surveys completed by parents and staff. We visited the early years unit, examined a sample of pupils' writing books and art portfolios, observed pupils reading to familiar adults and discussed learning in art with a group of pupils from Year 2, Year 4 and Year 6.