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10 June 2021

Dominique Osborne
Executive Principal
Thomas Hinderwell Primary Academy
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North Yorkshire
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Dear Mrs Osborne

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Thomas Hinderwell Primary Academy

Following my visit with Jean Watt, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) and Matthew Knox, 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 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 February 2020. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

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

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

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the David Ross Education Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Thomas
Her Majesty's Inspector

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

Context

Since the inspection in February 2020, there have been several changes to staffing. A new head of school was appointed in June 2020. In addition, an English leader, a learning mentor, an attendance lead and two new teachers, including one who is newly qualified, have taken up posts.

There has been a delay in some aspects of school improvement because of the impact of COVID-19. Recent staff absence has caused much of this delay. The trust has worked well with senior leaders to bring stability to staffing.

Leaders have implemented a recovery curriculum to support pupils on their return to school. They have identified pupils' needs. As a result, leaders have prioritised mathematics, English, religious education (RE), and personal, social and health education (PSHE). This means that teachers teach some subjects in less depth. Leaders plan to return to their full curriculum in September 2021.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Leaders have a clear vision for the quality of education for all pupils. Leaders have focused on improving all areas identified in the previous inspection. Their actions are having an impact. Leaders have developed their curriculum plans in all subjects. These plans now clearly set out the important knowledge that leaders want pupils to know and remember.

In mathematics, leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum. Pupils enjoy mathematics as they feel that they can successfully achieve work set by the teacher. In history, the curriculum is well designed and matches the breadth of the national curriculum. However, there is variability in the quality of pupil's work, especially for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There has been less progress made in the development of curriculum plans in RE. In this subject, pupils knew very little about world religions other than what they had just learned. Leaders have not been clear enough about what knowledge pupils need to learn and when.

Leaders have improved their systems to check on the progress that pupils are making. They do this through looking at pupils' books, visiting lessons and talking to pupils. However, some checks do not focus on what pupils are remembering over time.

All pupils access a full and broad curriculum. In some subjects, leaders have planned the curriculum so that it is suitable for pupils with SEND. In English and mathematics, pupils with SEND are successful. They feel happy and supported in their learning. They can remember key facts. In some other subjects, such as art

and science, plans are not developed for pupils with SEND in mind. In these subjects, pupils are less successful. They are unable to recall key facts. They do not consistently get the right support at the right time. Some parents of pupils with SEND, who spoke to an inspector at the start of the school day, still have concerns about the school, particularly in relation to staff turnover.

Reading is at the heart of everything that the school does. Leaders use a range of strategies to promote a love of reading. These include the 'DRET 10 challenge' which encourages pupils to read a variety of books. Adults read to pupils every day in story-time sessions. There is a structured and consistent approach to the teaching of phonics. This is helping pupils gain the knowledge they need in early reading. Leaders check on pupils' phonics knowledge. They identify any inconsistencies in teaching and support staff through weekly 'master classes'.

The early years leader has ensured that the curriculum helps children get off to the best start. She has ensured staff are well trained to support children's learning effectively. Teachers check what children know and use this to plan learning. Through well-designed activities, children have suitable opportunities to practise what they have learned. These activities help children to become independent and develop socially and emotionally. Teachers in the early years involve parents and carers in their child's journey. Parents are positive about this.

Leaders recognise the importance of language development in the early years. Teachers have improved how they teach this. The curriculum for language development is well thought out. This helps children to develop vital speaking and listening skills. Children enjoy hearing stories and practice retelling or making up their own stories using effective prompts and aids. This curriculum helps children to be well-prepared for key stage 1.

Until recently, the curriculum had not focused sufficiently well on the promotion of fundamental British values. Pupils are now developing their knowledge in these areas. Pupils talked positively about PSHE and knew about values such as tolerance. Some children in Reception Year were able to remember key facts about the Prime Minister and where he lives. Pupils are becoming better prepared for life in modern Britain.

There have been significant improvements in attendance since the last inspection. Leaders have implemented systems and strategies to ensure pupils attend school each day. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is reducing.

Leaders have raised their expectations of how pupils should behave. Staff and pupils understand these new expectations. The behaviour policy is clear. It sets out how adults can support pupils in promoting positive behaviour. Pupils say that most teachers manage behaviour well. However, recently, there has been a significant amount of staff absence. New staff are less familiar with the school's strategies. This means that sometimes new staff do not manage behaviour as effectively. Some

pupils report that behaviour is still a concern. Exclusion rates are still too high and leaders recognise that inconsistencies in managing behaviour have some effect on this.

Leaders are determined that all pupils regularly attend school. At the time of the last inspection, several pupils attended school on a partial timetable. Since then, all pupils now attend school on a full-time basis. This has had a positive effect on pupils' emotional health and well-being.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They appreciate the training that they have received. Training for staff has included areas such as safeguarding, curriculum development and behaviour management. Staff feel that leaders consider their views about whole-school issues. More recently, staff's views shaped the behaviour policy. Staff say they are proud to work at the school.

Trust leaders and governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The academy improvement board and trust leaders support and rigorously challenge the school leaders on a regular basis. They check progress made against the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. They do this through regular monitoring in school and meetings with leaders to 'test what they are hearing'. They acknowledge the progress made in attendance, parental engagement and curriculum development. They understand the need for further improvements for pupils with SEND, and behaviour.

Additional support

Support from the trust is strengthening the leadership of the school. The trust provides a comprehensive range of support through training and coaching. Trust leaders continue to support staff to develop their practice for pupils with SEND. School subject leaders work with other leaders from within the trust to develop their curriculum. They feel this is valuable.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with: the executive principal; senior leaders and staff; one of the trust's regional directors and the trust's director for primary education; members of the academy improvement board, including the chair; members of the trust; parents; and pupils. Inspectors visited a range of lessons, observed pupils during lunchtime and looked at pupils' work.