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Theresa Moses
Headteacher
Paxton Academy Sports and Science
843 London Road
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Dear Ms Moses

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Paxton Academy Sports and Science

Following my visit with Ruth Dollner, Her Majesty's Inspector (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 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 November 2019. 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 improvement 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 Wandle Learning Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the

director of children's services for Croydon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Adam Vincent
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 5 and 6 May 2021

Context

Following the section 5 inspection, the trust has made significant changes to the leadership team. The headteacher joined in September 2020. Other members of the leadership team are also new to the school.

The school moved from its temporary location to a new, purpose-built building in October 2020.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Leaders, trustees and the interim academy board (IAB) have established a clear vision for the school. Leaders have rightly prioritised improving pupils' behaviour and adopting a well-sequenced curriculum. Plans for improvement pinpoint the most important areas for development. Leaders also made sure that the move to the new school premises went smoothly. This helped pupils and staff to remain focused on learning.

During the autumn term 2020, leaders had rewritten curriculum plans in most subjects. Curriculum planning is now well thought through, with a focus on helping pupils to build on their previous learning. However, work to improve the curriculum has not been as rapid as leaders intended. Leaders' implementation of the new curriculum remains at an early stage, in part due to the pandemic. In history and geography, for example, the new curriculum has only been introduced recently. While English and mathematics are further ahead, it is too soon to see clear improvements in how well pupils are learning in most subjects.

Leaders are beginning to address weaknesses in the provision for pupils' personal development. This includes the recent introduction of a new curriculum for pupils' personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. Leaders have clear expectations for the knowledge pupils should be taught and when. They have also invested in resources to support the new PSHE curriculum. However, leaders' work to check the delivery of the curriculum has only just started. Some teaching does not match the subject content set out in curriculum planning. This prevents some pupils from building their understanding effectively.

Following the previous inspection, the leadership team focused first on addressing the weaknesses in reading. A new, systematic approach to phonics teaching is used consistently throughout Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. Staff receive regular training in early reading. This is developing their expertise in delivering the phonics programme. Staff now make sure that pupils' books are well matched to their phonics knowledge. Pupils who need additional support receive focused, one-to-one phonics teaching. Leaders are checking that this extra help focuses on getting pupils

back on track. Pupils, including in the Reception Year, read regularly with their teacher and enjoy listening to stories in class.

Leaders and teachers worked closely with the trust to launch a new mathematics curriculum in September 2020. Subject planning aims to make sure that pupils know and remember essential mathematical concepts. New subject content is introduced in a logical order. Training for staff means that they now have a better understanding of how to develop pupils' mathematical knowledge. The new curriculum is showing positive early signs. Gaps in pupils' knowledge are beginning to be addressed. Pupils confidently described the mathematical concepts that they had studied. They explained how they practised their knowledge, such as interpreting graphs in science. Leaders have identified pupils' new starting points following periods of partial school closure. Leaders continue to adapt subject planning to help pupils to catch up on any missed learning. This remains a priority for leaders this year.

Leaders are raising expectations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have made sure that these pupils' well-being and personal development are not overlooked. Pupils with SEND and vulnerable pupils receive individual mentoring which supports them well. Staff have received training on how to plan for the needs of pupils in their class. That said, sometimes, staff remain unclear on how they can cater effectively for pupils' individual needs. Support for pupils with SEND is not as well targeted as it needs to be. Leaders have suitable plans in place to address the remaining weaknesses in the provision for pupils with SEND.

Leaders and staff have higher expectations of pupils' behaviour than in the past. The move to the new building has, in part, provided pupils with a fresh start. Leaders used the move as an opportunity to set their expectations for pupils' conduct. This included refining the behaviour policy. Staff now have clear guidance on how they should promote positive behaviour. Low-level disruption during lessons is rare. Pupils' conduct around the school is typically calm and considerate; for example, pupils hold doors open for their peers. In the Reception class too, children learn together in a calm atmosphere. These improvements are helping to create an environment in which pupils are keen to learn. Pupils said that they enjoy coming to school. They know that staff are there to help them when they need it.

Many subject leaders are new to their roles. They have benefited from expertise within the trust to design the curriculum. The trust is also providing training for staff to support them to deliver new subject planning. Staff value the guidance and training that leaders and the trust provide.

The IAB has a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Working with leaders and the trust, governors have set suitable goals for improvement. They have helped leaders to refine actions and priorities in light of the COVID-19 restrictions. Short-term priorities, such as the need to provide

suitable remote education, have been balanced with a continued focus on the curriculum and pupils' behaviour. Through regular meetings with leaders, governors check that actions are making a positive difference to the quality of education. Governors also provided leaders with valuable advice when the school moved to its new premises.

Additional support

Support from the trust has been instrumental in helping leaders to overcome the main barriers to improving the school. This includes making sure that appropriate staff, such as subject leaders, have been appointed. The trust's well-targeted guidance and training are developing the skills and expertise of leaders. This is increasing the leadership team's capacity to make improvements, particularly to the curriculum.

Evidence

Inspectors visited lessons, listened to pupils read, spoke with staff and pupils, and looked at examples of pupils' work. Inspectors looked at documents and met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. Inspectors also met with the multi-academy trust chief executive officer, pupils, representatives of those responsible for governance and a representative of the local authority.