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29 June 2021

David Taylor
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mr Taylor

Special measures monitoring inspection of Dinnington Community Primary School

Following my visit with Andrea Batley, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), Tim Jenner, HMI, and Matthew Knox, HMI, to your school on 8 and 9 June 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in April 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 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, and the chief executive officer of the White Woods Primary Academy Trust, 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

Kirsty Godfrey
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 June 2021

Context

There have been significant leadership and staffing changes since the school's section 5 inspection. The trust has appointed you as executive headteacher, along with a new head of school and three assistant headteachers, in the last year. Most teachers are new to their posts. There have also been changes in governance, including a new chief executive officer (CEO).

The staffing and leadership changes, along with the impact caused when the school was only open to some children due to COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions, have slowed the pace of improvement for some of the identified priorities. However, all of the necessary leadership and teaching positions have now been secured to enable further improvement.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Trustees and those responsible for governance are highly ambitious for the school. They have taken action to secure a stable leadership team with the expertise needed to move the school forward at a faster pace. Trust-wide systems have been implemented and are enabling governors to hold leaders to account more rigorously.

Regular communication between trustees, members of the academy improvement board, the CEO and the school's senior leaders, is enabling checks to be made on the impact of leaders' actions. Trust oversight has improved the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements and is starting to bring about some of the improvements needed to the quality of education.

There has been a determined effort to place reading at the heart of the curriculum. The use of the learning environment to promote a love of reading reflects the importance leaders place on reading. Staff feel they are benefiting from being part of a trust as they can work with other schools to share good practice and develop their expertise in teaching early reading. All staff have been trained in teaching phonics. However, while this is leading to greater consistency of approach, there is too little attention to developing pupils' spelling through phonics teaching.

Leaders have allocated more time to teaching reading, and books for beginner readers are now matched to pupils' developing phonic knowledge. This is giving pupils further opportunities to practise using the phonic knowledge they have been taught. Teachers make effective checks on pupils' phonic knowledge. This makes sure adults can quickly identify which pupils need extra support to help them catch up. Leaders have made sure that these pupils, including those who are in key stage 2, have additional support. However, struggling readers in key stage 2 are not getting enough practice to make sure that they catch up rapidly. In English lessons,

their time is spent on reading and spelling activities which they cannot manage successfully. This is because they do not have the necessary phonic knowledge.

The school's guided reading approach is not having the impact it should for struggling readers. There is confusion about whether the intention is for pupils to practise decoding or to develop their understanding of language. The same text is unhelpfully being used for both purposes.

Some parents and pupils report that home reading books are not being issued regularly at present. You are awaiting the delivery of books for children in Reception Year.

Despite some successful actions to improve the curriculum for teaching reading, there remains a large proportion of pupils from early years to key stage 2 who are not reading with age-appropriate fluency as soon as they should.

Leaders have made sure that pupils are now experiencing a broader range of curriculum subjects. Subject plans are in place to support teachers in knowing what to teach. The plans have been adopted from another trust school. However, the plans have not always been given careful consideration to make sure they are constructed effectively. For example, English plans do not set out when pupils will be taught basics such as pen grip and letter formation. As a result, many pupils have not secured this important knowledge. Bad habits become established and persist from early years to key stage 2.

As a trust, senior leaders have developed more detailed plans for science, geography, and history. These plans show a clearer progression in knowledge which is broken down into smaller building blocks for success. They are due to be implemented in September 2021.

Almost all middle leaders are new to post. Therefore, they have had minimal impact on improving the effect of the curriculum on pupils' outcomes in their areas of responsibility. Middle leaders are enthusiastic about their work and they are supported by trust colleagues and external links, such as with the English hub. However, you are aware that middle leadership across the school remains a priority. Your plans for development in this area have been hampered by the impact of COVID-19. This aspect of the school's work is now pivotal to increasing the capacity for sustained improvement.

Leaders' improvement plans are generally addressing the most pressing priorities. However, there is less clarity about how the quality of education in early years will be developed. Early years plans are not effective in identifying what children need to learn and remember to reach ambitious end points by the end of Reception Year. This means that teaching in some areas of learning, including with early writing, is not preparing children well enough for the next stage of their learning in key stage

1. Continued trust support for the early years leader will be essential in bringing about the necessary improvements.

The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has taken action to identify pupils' needs and has worked with staff to set individual targets for English and mathematics. This work is in its early stages. There is sometimes a lack of precision in pupils' targets or how these targets will be broken down into smaller steps.

Leaders have made sure there is a strong culture of safeguarding. They have put clear systems in place to identify vulnerable pupils. Cases are reviewed regularly, and referrals are made in a timely manner. Regular training and updates for all staff mean that adults are aware of important safeguarding issues. They are able to spot concerns and know how to report them to the right people quickly. Pupils say they feel safe in school and have a person they can go to with any worries.

Attendance has been a priority. The head of school has raised the profile of the importance of good attendance through online videos and award assemblies. If pupils' attendance slips, then leaders act quickly. Home visits are used to ensure that vulnerable pupils are safe if they do not arrive at school.

Staff feel well supported by senior leaders and the trust. They say that new leaders have had a positive impact on staff workload and well-being. They feel that the culture of the school is improving and are proud of their contribution to the school's improvement.

Priorities for further improvement

- Leaders should take immediate action to address the weaknesses in the curriculum for early writing by ensuring that:
 - English plans clearly set out when pupils will develop their knowledge of handwriting (including pen grip and letter formation) and spelling
 - effective links are made between reading and spelling in phonics teaching so that pupils understand the reversible nature of the alphabetic code
 - teachers provide pupils with frequent opportunities to practise using previously taught knowledge of spelling and handwriting so that it quickly becomes secure and embedded.

Additional support

Trust support has been an important factor in developing leadership and providing support and training for staff. New curriculum plans for science, history, and geography, which have been developed by senior leaders in the trust, provide a blueprint from which to develop curriculum plans across a broader range of subjects. A partner school is being used to establish a support network for new subject leaders. Leaders have benefited from training and support provided by the local English hub in their development of the curriculum for reading.

Continued additional support will be critical in bringing about the necessary improvements.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, head of school, SENCo, subject leaders, pupils, staff, the multi-academy trust chief executive officer and representatives of those responsible for governance.