

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Matt Green
Interim headteacher
Southfield Primary School
Banbury Road
Brackley
Northamptonshire
NN13 6AU

Dear Mr Green

Special measures monitoring inspection of Southfield Primary School

Following my visit with Liz Moore, Ofsted Inspector (OI), to your school on 15 and 16 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 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 July 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 am of the opinion that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for West Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Di Mullan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 15 and 16 June 2021

Context

Since the last full inspection of Southfield Primary School in July 2019, seven teachers, including the headteacher and deputy headteacher, have left the school. Every member of the board of governors resigned and an entirely new governing body has been appointed. There have been no significant changes since the remote additional monitoring inspection that took place in February 2021.

The Warriner Trust appointed an interim headteacher, who took up his post in October 2019, following the publication of the last inspection report. Trust leaders continue to pursue brokering the school, so that it can join the Warriner Trust. This has yet to be finalised.

Some aspects of leaders' plans to improve the school have been delayed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes leaders' ability to check thoroughly the impact of the training staff have received.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Leaders are driving forward improvements at the school. Shortly after the headteacher's appointment, leaders wrote a 'rapid action plan' to address the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. The plan set out clear aims and appropriate actions to bring about improvement. Since that time, leaders have written a new plan that builds on the original plan. The new plan takes account of the successes of the original one and any actions that were delayed due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It also sets out leaders' current priorities to improve the school further.

Leaders wasted no time in improving communication with parents and carers. Immediately following the appointment of the headteacher, leaders held a series of meetings with parents to talk about their plans. Leaders have been keeping parents informed about the developments at the school and seeking their views. There are several ways that parents can communicate with school. The headteacher makes himself available to parents daily. Parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, speak highly of the progress that the school has made since the arrival of the headteacher.

Leaders have prioritised improving the quality of education at the school. They have made sure that all the subjects of the national curriculum are taught. They put plans in place so that teachers know which parts of each subject they should teach to their class. Following the additional monitoring inspection in February 2021, leaders acted swiftly to improve the curriculum further.

They have started to write new curriculum plans. These plans set out in detail what pupils must learn in each subject and the order they should learn it. The plans state the important knowledge and vocabulary that pupils must learn and remember. The plans are well under way, but they are not finished. For example, they do not include what children in the early years must learn and be able to do. Leaders know what to do to finalise the plans. They are determined that the plans will contain enough detail for teachers to start implementing the new curriculum from September 2021.

Leaders have provided staff with training so that they better understand how pupils learn. Some staff have had bespoke support to improve their practice. There is a two-year programme for teachers and teaching assistants to receive training and observe each other's practice in the classroom. This plan includes time for staff to discuss what they have learned and how this will make a difference to their own work with pupils. This is still in its early stages.

Leaders have not yet provided teachers and teaching assistants with training in the teaching of early reading. There are inconsistencies in how reading is taught. The books that teachers give pupils to read do not match closely enough the sounds that they have been learning in their lessons. Pupils at the early stages of learning to read cannot use all the sounds that they have learned to read the books accurately. Pupils resort to a range of strategies to help them read.

Senior leaders have begun to develop other leadership roles across the school. For example, subject leaders have been appointed. The subject leaders are playing an important role in writing the school's new curriculum. There is still work to do to fully develop all the leadership roles across the school. Some leadership roles have not yet been determined. Nevertheless, leaders, including governors, are demonstrating increasing capacity to bring about the improvements that are needed at the school.

The trust appointed a special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). She has provided training for staff. There are clear systems for identifying if pupils may have special educational needs and/or disabilities and making sure that they get the support they need. Leaders work with external agencies to provide support for pupils.

All governors are new to their roles since the last inspection. They have received training to help them to develop their skills and understanding. They are increasingly holding leaders to account. They have a growing understanding of their strategic roles and the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

Leaders consulted with staff, parents and pupils when they introduced a new behaviour policy. The new policy is understood by staff and pupils alike. Pupils and staff told inspectors that behaviour has improved since the last inspection. There

are still instances of inappropriate behaviour in school. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that other pupils talking in class is a disruption to their learning.

Staff at all levels who spoke with inspectors said that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being. Leaders have involved staff in developing a new vision for the school. Staff appreciate leaders listening to their views. There is a sense of teamwork and mutual support within the staff team. Staff and governors are determined that the improvements that have been made so far will be built upon.

Priorities for further improvement.

- Early reading is not consistently taught well. Staff have not received formal training in teaching phonics in recent years. The books that pupils are given to read are not matched well enough to the sounds they know. Pupils do not reliably use the sounds that they have learned to read unfamiliar words. Leaders must ensure that teachers and teaching assistants receive up-to-date training in teaching phonics so that there is a consistent approach to teaching early reading across the school.

Additional support

The Warriner Trust has provided support for Southfield Primary School since October 2019. Staff at all levels have received training to enable them to fulfil their roles more successfully. They say that this has improved their confidence. The trust supported leaders to write clear action plans and to draft the current and new curriculum plans. This is helping leaders and teachers to understand how pupils learn and the importance of a carefully planned curriculum. Governors have benefited from support to begin to undertake their roles.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, subject leaders, the leader for the early years and the SENCo. They met with four governors, including the chair, and the CEO of The Warriner Trust, which is supporting the school. They spoke with groups of pupils and a group of staff. Inspectors visited lessons with senior leaders and listened to pupils reading. Inspectors looked at pupils' work from all year groups across a range of subjects. They examined the school's current curriculum plans and the new plans that are being written ready for implementation from September 2021. Inspectors examined the single central record and spoke with leaders about arrangements for safeguarding. They also considered the 20 responses to the online staff survey and the 66 responses to the Parent View survey.