

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Steve Beynon
Head of School
Minerva Primary School
Outer Circle
Taunton
Somerset
TA1 2BU

Dear Mr Beynon

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Minerva Primary School

Following my visit with Jen Southall, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 12–13 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 May 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 not taking effective action 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 Redstart Learning Partnership multi-academy trust, the regional

schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Costello
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 12 May 2021 to 13 May 2021

Context

Since the previous section 5 inspection, there have been significant changes to leadership and governance. In September 2020, a temporary teacher took responsibility for leading mathematics and the early years leader took responsibility for leading English. The assistant head of school has been absent this year. The arrangements for local governance have changed. A 'core group' which includes the head of school, the multi-academy trust's chief executive officer (CEO) and deputy CEO and a 'link' trustee oversees leaders' work. The school's class structure has reduced from five to four classes and a nursery.

We focused on the areas for improvement tackled since the previous section 5 inspection. We looked closely at English, early reading, mathematics, science and geography. We considered how well your curriculum meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and the improvements made to pupils' attendance, behaviour and personal development.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Following the section 5 inspection in May 2019, leaders identified the right improvement priorities. However, there have been many changes to staffing in the school since then. Leaders have not managed these changes in leadership roles and responsibilities well. As a result, the pace of improvement has been too slow. Leaders are not demonstrating the capacity to bring about rapid improvement. Important systems and processes to secure effective change are not in place.

The core group, responsible for governance, is not holding leaders to account effectively for improving the quality of education. The group does not pay sufficient attention to the school's priorities or check the quality of the curriculum well enough. Group members lack the accurate information about the quality of education and the standard of pupils' work needed to hold staff to account. This is delaying improvements to the planning and delivery of the curriculum.

Too many changes to curriculum leadership roles and responsibilities have resulted in insufficient action to implement a rich and ambitious curriculum. Leadership roles are not clearly defined and understood. Leaders have not prioritised the professional development needs of recently appointed leaders. As a result, some leaders lack confidence and are ill-equipped to shoulder their school improvement responsibilities.

The curriculum in English does not help pupils to know more and remember more over time. The writing curriculum is particularly weak. Leaders recognise that urgent

work is needed to improve pupils' grammar and vocabulary in key stage 2. Pupils are not prepared well for the next stage of their education.

Subject leaders do not have a clear understanding of the learning that should take place across the school. In subjects such as mathematics and science, important knowledge is not identified or built in a coherent way. For example, problem solving and reasoning are not planned into the mathematics curriculum effectively. This limits pupils' ability to apply and deepen their knowledge and understanding.

Teachers do not make effective use of assessments to identify what pupils have learned and can remember, including in the early years. Teachers do not check that pupils have securely learnt key knowledge before they move on to the next step in the curriculum. At times, this makes learning too difficult, including for pupils with SEND. Inaccurate assessment also results in pupils who have fallen behind not catching up as quickly as they should.

Work to improve the early reading curriculum is beginning to pay off. The teaching of reading in the early years and key stage 1 is improving. Pupils use their phonics knowledge accurately when they read. Leaders have made appropriate plans to improve pupils' speech and language across the school. However, this work is in its infancy and there is still much more to do.

Pupils with SEND have their needs assessed accurately. The SEND coordinator and the trust behaviour leader have focused on supporting pupils with their social, emotional and mental health needs. For example, the nurture groups are helping pupils to settle and be able to join in when they return to their classrooms. However, leaders acknowledge that the curriculum for pupils with SEND needs to be developed. Learning is not consistently well matched to pupils' needs. This is hampering their progress and preventing them from catching up.

Pupils' attendance has improved. Leaders' actions to improve pupils' behaviour are reducing pupil exclusions. However, behaviour in some lessons is poor.

Staff state that leaders are considerate of their workload and look after their well-being. Trainee teachers say they are well supported by the school.

The school should take further action to:

- Ensure the core group hold staff to account for the actions they are taking to improve the school.
- Make sure that teachers use assessment well to identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge, to enable them to catch up quickly in all subjects.
- Equip subject leaders with the skills and knowledge they need to implement effective and ambitious curriculum plans in every subject.

Additional support

Staff in the nurture provision appreciate support from the trust's behaviour leader. Nurture staff are developing pupils' resilience well as a result of the guidance they receive. Some subject leaders have attended meetings organised by the trust. However, this is recent, and it is too early to see an impact.

Teachers have benefited from support and challenge from local English hub. This is leading to recent improvements to the reading curriculum in the early years and key stage 1.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, heard pupils read, scrutinised documents and reviewed staff and parent surveys. Inspectors also met with the head of school, other senior leaders, subject leaders, the trust's deputy CEO, pupils and a trustee. Inspectors visited classrooms, on one occasion more than once, to ensure that the whole class was present during the visit to the lesson.