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Ingrid Abrahams
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Dear Mrs Abrahams

Special measures monitoring inspection of King Solomon International Business School

Following my visit with Huw Bishop, Kirsty Foulkes and Gwen Onyons, Ofsted Inspectors (OI), to your school on 23 and 24 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in May 2018. 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.

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 directors, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in May 2018

- Improve the quality of teaching in key stage 3 so that in all classes pupils are offered the right level of challenge and support. Do this by:
 - making sure teachers plan work more specifically for pupils who have the potential to reach or exceed age-related standards in English, mathematics and science
 - insisting that all teachers use assessment information about pupils' attainment and progress to plan work that is suitably matched to pupils' needs and abilities, retains their interest and extends their learning
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to respond fully to questions during class discussions in order to challenge them more effectively
 - building on the good practice that exists in some lessons where teachers and support staff vigilantly support pupils to remain on task when working independently and regularly correct errors and address misunderstandings.

- Improve pupils' attainment and progress in key stage 3 and sustain improvements to pupils' achievement in key stage 1 as they transfer into key stage 2. Do this by:
 - making sure that in all classes across key stage 3 pupils make more rapid progress and that pupils in Year 9 are better prepared for key stage 4
 - reducing more rapidly the difference between the standards reached by disadvantaged pupils compared with others who are not disadvantaged
 - improving, with greater urgency, the achievement of key stage 3 pupils in science
 - making sure that those pupils who are capable of reaching or exceeding age-related standards in English and mathematics in key stage 3 do so.

- Make sure that staff apply consistently the school's procedures for managing pupils' behaviour during lessons in key stage 3 by:
 - ensuring that pupils develop positive attitudes to their work and thus improve their capacity to learn
 - applying more consistent approaches to modify and improve pupils' behaviour
 - reducing instances of persistent low-level disruption during lessons
 - continuing to reduce temporary and repeat exclusion rates.

- Improve leadership, management and governance by:
 - consolidating and maintaining stable and secure senior leadership
 - building on the work being done by the strongest senior and middle leaders as the school continues to grow in size
 - making sure that leaders and governors evaluate more accurately the effectiveness of teaching and learning in order to address weaknesses and build on strengths
 - identifying the most important priorities for improvement in the school's strategic action plans, particularly those focusing on the quality of teaching
 - setting out in the school's short- and long-term action plans clear measures of success, as well as stages and milestones, to help leaders and governors evaluate the impact of actions taken to bring about and sustain improvement
 - implementing more robust performance management and oversight of teaching and learning to eliminate weak teaching in key stage 3
 - ensuring that governors are more vigilant in holding leaders to account and have access to objective and accurate assessments of the school's work and progress.

External reviews of governance and of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 23 and 24 June 2021

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit in November 2019, the acting school improvement director was appointed as part-time executive headteacher, jointly with a co-executive headteacher. The latter has recently stepped back from the leadership team to be an executive project lead. Most of the other current senior staff in the secondary phase have been appointed since the last monitoring inspection. There is a new head of science, head of inclusion and designated safeguarding leader. Altogether, 35 new staff have been appointed since the last monitoring inspection. A new sixth form opened in September 2020, and the school received pupils into Year 5 for the first time. Eight new directors took up their posts in April 2021 at the recommendation of the regional schools commissioner. The regional schools commissioner also recommended a local multi-academy trust to be the school's external improvement partner. The multi-academy trust took up the role a month before this monitoring visit.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

There has been stability at senior leadership level since the last monitoring visit over 18 months ago. Leaders have established a calm, orderly environment, exemplified in the morning worship assembly. Leaders have taken successful measures to significantly reduce the number of incidents of serious and low-level disruption in classrooms in the secondary phase. In turn, this has reduced the number of pupils in the inclusion room. Inspectors did not see any pupils standing in the corridor having been sent out of lessons, as was the case previously. Pupils spoken to confirmed that behaviour is much improved. Teachers set clear expectations of behaviour in lessons and this is no longer a barrier for pupils, who are now in a good position ready to learn.

Pupils reported that they feel safe in school and are taught well to keep themselves safe. There were no safeguarding incidents or concerns seen during the visit by inspectors.

Feedback from parents raised some valid concerns about provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Parents were highly complimentary about the work done by senior leaders to secure improvements during the COVID-19 pandemic, and they remain highly positive about the leadership and provision in the primary phase.

Senior leaders have steered the school successfully through the significant disruption caused by COVID-19.

Leaders have continued to manage the growth of the school successfully as it has taken on additional year groups. While the senior leadership team has continued to expand, a number of foundation subjects do not have a subject leader.

The recently appointed new directors bring considerable knowledge, experience and skills to the board, but it is too early to assess the impact of these additional appointments.

In the primary phase, there is a structured phonics programme in place for early reading that staff fully understand and follow. Leaders have provided appropriate training for all staff on phonics. This is supporting consistent delivery by staff in lessons, although occasionally the main focus of the learning is not clear. There are also times where pupils sit and wait rather than being actively engaged in learning. Books are well matched to the sounds pupils are learning and are further supported by online resources. Lower attaining pupils and those with SEND are accessing texts matched to need, although they are not yet reading with sufficient fluency. Teachers are checking pupils' learning and using this assessment to address most errors and misconceptions.

The early years environment is well organised and presented, indoors and outdoors. All areas of the curriculum are promoted and provided for, with adults supporting children within group activities. Children show confidence and independence. Standards seen in writing were high, with children forming letters correctly, applying their phonics in their writing and creating a cohesive narrative. Teachers could explain how the curriculum is planned to help children learn more and how they help children make links with previous learning. Children understand their uniqueness. Learning journals capture 'pupil voice' and show engagement and a range of activities that promote the full curriculum. There are occasions, however, when adults accept one-word answers or short phrases rather than engaging children in an extended conversation.

Leaders promote cultural diversity throughout the school as seen in curriculum and teaching. They reflect the needs and aspirations of their predominantly black and minority ethnic pupils. This is combined with the school's Christian ethos.

In English, pupils have opportunities to recap to reinforce previous work they have learned. This helps them to draw on their previous knowledge and gain a better understanding of the text they are studying, for example 'Romeo and Juliet' in key stage 3. Teachers plan carefully so that pupils' vocabulary is personalised to their needs. In some lessons, additional support enables lower-attaining pupils and those with SEND to thrive, but this is not consistent. In other lessons, there are no expectations that these groups of pupils complete the written work that has been set.

The mathematics curriculum is broad, ambitious, coherent and sequenced well. It has been implemented well since the last inspection. The effective use of assessment means that teachers can check on previous learning to check what pupils have remembered. Teachers address any gaps in learning immediately. Leaders promote early mathematics in a good way with direct teaching supported by opportunities to explore and investigate further. Pupils are counting, recognising and writing numbers to 20, and use numeracy well across the curriculum. However, in some mathematics books, for lower-attaining pupils in the primary and secondary phases, work is incomplete.

In French, pupils in Year 10 are working at a very low standard. In addition to the disruptions of COVID-19, their progress has been hampered because leaders have not thought carefully about the sequence of the curriculum. For example, pupils chose to switch from French to Spanish halfway through Year 8 and throughout Year 9. As a result, those who opted for French in key stage 4 had gaps in their learning of French from the key stage 3 programme. Even those pupils identified as relatively higher attaining in French struggle in Year 10 to write a sentence using the simple past tense. Opportunities for writing, based on the evidence of work seen in pupils' books, are too limited.

In science, there have been improvements in coordination between the primary and secondary curriculum to prepare pupils for the transition from Year 6 to Year 7 next year. Each of the three sciences is taught in termly blocks in the two-year key stage 3, so there are long gaps between when pupils will revisit each science. This leads to pupils having to revisit work they have not done for some time and have forgotten. However, in the primary phase, science is well sequenced and pupils have a dedicated lesson every week. Year 4 pupils could articulate the scientific concepts they had learned from previous experiments, such as rubbing balloons to investigate static electricity. There is no evidence in pupils' books, however, that the science curriculum is adapted for pupils with SEND or lower-attaining pupils, especially in secondary. Sometimes pupils do not engage in activities because they do not understand the work or have not acquired the knowledge from previous learning to do the task required.

Despite more senior leaders being appointed, there is insufficient capacity of leadership in special educational needs across the school. Teachers are not equipped well enough to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. In the secondary phase, there is not enough monitoring of the effectiveness of support and provision for these pupils in subjects. The lack of provision for pupils with SEND is evident in many of the subjects seen in secondary, and to a lesser extent in primary as well. There were exceptions to this in mathematics, health and care, and in some parts of English, where the curriculum meets the needs of low-attaining pupils and pupils with SEND well. Overall, however, pupils with SEND and lower-attaining pupils do not benefit from a good-quality education. This is because work is not matched well to their starting points. Too often, teachers set work that is too hard. These pupils' needs are not met in most subjects in key stage 3 and 4 because of a lack of adaption to the curriculum and support. Across a range of subjects, inspectors saw pupils with SEND or low-attaining pupils not attempting the work. This leads to passivity and non-engagement. Teachers' expectations of presentation for these pupils are low, compared to the well-presented books seen for most other pupils. Low-attaining pupils and pupils with SEND in the secondary phase confirmed that there are regular occurrences where they do not understand the work and do not receive additional help and support. This is the case across a range of subjects. All of the pupils spoken to praised the extra support they receive in mathematics, however.

The main strategy for support for pupils with SEND remains within the inclusion room, with very little in-class support in secondary. There is a calm atmosphere and well-organised areas in the inclusion room. Staff know and understand the pupils well, although plans for support are at an early stage of development.

There was no evidence seen that newly qualified teachers have been given the strategies and training they require to meet the needs of pupils with SEND in their subjects. Despite leaders monitoring their lesson planning and looking at pupils' books, this has not had sufficient impact on their practice. In a number of subjects

in the secondary phases there is just one teacher responsible for all the teaching without a subject leader, for example in music and history. In these instances, the single teacher has no one else in the subject to draw on for support, role-modelling and subject knowledge.

Although pupils have experienced lost learning due to COVID-19, leaders made the decision to start the new academic year in the summer term, meaning all pupils moved up a year group. Primary classes moved up to their new teachers in April. This has not had such an adverse effect on their learning as they are still following their programme of study for the current year. However, Year 9 pupils finished key stage 3 at half term and have dropped subjects they have not chosen for GCSE. This means they had less time to study the subjects they are not continuing with.

Despite the improvements in behaviour in lessons, punctuality in the secondary phase is poor. Inspectors saw numerous pupils arriving at school late after the gate had been closed. In turn, pupils were arriving late to the first lesson, causing disruption as teachers had to stop and restart lessons. Leaders and staff do not challenge pupils for lateness. Many pupils did not stop at reception to sign in late but went straight to first lesson, where they were marked present without a mark for lateness.

- Leaders should ensure that all secondary phase teachers receive the necessary training and support to equip them well for their role to meet the needs of pupils with SEND and low-attaining pupils.
- Leaders should ensure that all pupils arrive on time for school.

Additional support

Leaders are effectively dependent on external support. The Department for Education will have oversight of the school's improvement plan, which has been drafted by the school's improvement partner, recommended by the regional schools commissioner. The school's self-evaluation, which is over-generous, was drafted by the school's executive project lead. As a result, leaders and directors are not yet demonstrating sufficient capacity to improve independently. However, effective action has been taken to improve governance and improvement planning by the measures taken by external partners, who have also recommended a review of safeguarding and governance.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the heads of the secondary and primary phases, other senior leaders and members of staff. Inspectors spoke to three directors remotely, including the chair, and met two members from a local multi-academy trust providing additional

support as the school's improvement partner. They also met with the executive project lead. Inspectors met groups of pupils from both the primary and secondary phases. An inspector met a representative from a local football academy. They focused in depth on English, mathematics, science and early reading. Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day. They took account of 57 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 51 Parent View free-text responses. They also took account of 28 responses to the staff survey.

All Year 10 pupils were sent home two days before the inspection visit to isolate for 10 days because of an outbreak of COVID-19 in the cohort.