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Stacy McHale
Acting Principal
St Teresa's Catholic Primary Academy
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Dear Mrs McHale

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Teresa's Catholic Primary Academy

Following my visit with Helen Forrest, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), 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 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 March 2020. 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 company's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement 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 local governing body, the Catholic senior executive leader of the St Francis and St Clare Catholic multi-academy company, the director of education for the Archdiocese of Birmingham, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wolverhampton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Wayne Simner
Her Majesty's Inspector

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

Context

The implementation of the school's improvement plans has been affected by COVID-19-related issues. Two national lockdowns and a series of 'bubble' closures disrupted curriculum delivery. However, school leaders made, and continue to make, effective provision for remote education. Training opportunities for staff have also been affected.

There have been some significant staff changes since the inspection in March 2020. The acting principal joined the school in August 2020. A teacher left the school in August 2020 and has been replaced by a teacher on a temporary contract. Leaders have restructured the team of support staff. A new teacher has been appointed for September 2021. She will be part of the leadership team and will lead mathematics across the school. A new governor recently joined the local governing body.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

School leaders, the multi-academy company and governors want the very best for all pupils. Leaders at all levels understand the school's strengths and the areas for improvement. They are taking appropriate action to address the areas identified in the previous section 5 inspection report.

Leaders are developing the curriculum design and delivery to improve the quality of education for all pupils. However, there is still much work to be done and leaders know this. They are planning improvements in a measured and proportionate manner. Leaders are supporting staff to enable them to understand the changes and implement them well over time.

Leaders recognise that different subjects are at different stages of development. They have rightly focused on English and mathematics. However, leaders have started to develop the curriculum in other subjects, including history and geography. Curriculum plans are in place in these subjects. Some are based on published schemes and plans, and some have been created by leaders with support from other schools within the multi-academy company. Plans are well ordered and clearly map out the knowledge, skills and vocabulary that pupils will learn over time. Leaders have already reviewed and adapted some of the curriculum plans to improve them further. For example, they have successfully reviewed the English curriculum to improve the sequence of learning to raise the quality of pupils' writing. Some curriculum plans, such as geography, are in the early stages of being used and hence it is too early to see if they are successfully improving pupils' learning.

Reading was not identified as an area for improvement at the most recent section 5 inspection. However, leaders prioritise the teaching of reading because of its importance in the curriculum. In most cases, staff teach phonics well due to

effective training. Pupils' reading books are well matched to their phonic ability. Staff make the most of every opportunity to extend pupils' vocabulary through reading activities and in other subjects. Consequently, younger pupils, including those who struggle with reading, read confidently and fluently. Very recently, leaders introduced a whole-class approach to the teaching of reading from Year 2 to Year 6. Leaders believe that the structured nature of this approach will improve pupils' reading fluency and reading comprehension. However, it is too early to say if this new approach is having a positive impact on pupils' reading.

In mathematics, leaders and teachers have adapted curriculum plans to address gaps in pupils' knowledge caused by historic weaker teaching and the periods when schools were only open to some children due to COVID-19 restrictions. Teachers regularly check pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts in lessons and at key points throughout the year. They use this information to inform future teaching. This approach successfully identifies gaps so that these areas can be revisited. However, because of previous weak teaching, some gaps in pupils' mathematical knowledge remain. Leaders and teachers need to continue to focus on filling these gaps. The appointment of the new mathematics leader for September will widen the leadership of this subject.

School leaders are working hard to improve teachers' subject knowledge. They checked, and continue to monitor, staff's training needs. This enables leaders to provide staff with additional support when needed. Leaders arrange whole-school training in areas such as English, mathematics and assessment. Teachers value the training they receive as it helps them to deliver the curriculum more effectively. The majority of staff think that leaders are considerate of their well-being. They say that leaders are always available, and staff value this support.

Leaders know that there is still variability in how well the curriculum is delivered across the school. The detail in the new curriculum plans is helping teachers to improve their subject knowledge. This level of detail is also starting to achieve greater consistency in teaching across the school. However, this is more successful in some year groups than others. School leaders are working closely with some teachers to provide specific additional support. This will continue to be an ongoing priority.

Leaders monitor disadvantaged pupils closely. The work of the attendance officer has led to continued high attendance for all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. Leaders make sure that pupils who are disadvantaged have full access to all aspects of the school curriculum and do not miss out. Curriculum improvements are starting to have a positive impact on outcomes for all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged.

Leaders have invested financially in creating a welcoming and well-resourced outdoor learning environment in the early years. This outdoor environment is brand new and the use of this resource is in its early stages. Leaders have organised

training linked to the effective use of the outdoor area for later in the term. If used well, this area will provide much-needed opportunities for children's independent learning activities. This is a key priority in the early years.

Those responsible for governance are knowledgeable about the improvements that are being made relating to the quality of education. They are also very clear about what the school's next steps need to be. The local governing body has close links with the multi-academy company. Strong communication between the two bodies supports joint monitoring of the school improvement effectively. Governors are providing an increasing level of support and challenge to school leaders. The acting principal finds this support and challenge helpful.

Additional support

The multi-academy company provides a well-organised programme of support for the school. This includes formal and informal support for senior leaders. Curriculum leaders across the company work together, share good practice and support each other. There are also opportunities for staff to observe good practice in other schools, but these plans have been hindered by COVID-19-related safety measures. Leaders and staff value the support they receive from the company. Being part of the company has widened the leadership team and is starting to have a positive impact on improving the quality of education in the school.

The local authority also provides support, guidance and training to school leaders and staff in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. The support is ongoing and is again valued by school leaders and staff. The local authority and the multi-academy company meet termly to make sure there is not an overlap or duplication of support. The acting principal and the Catholic senior executive leader work together to coordinate additional support so they do not overload staff with too much training.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents. They met with the acting principal, subject leaders, the Catholic senior executive leader and other senior leaders within the multi-academy company. The lead inspector met virtually with members of the local governing body and the academy improvement board. He also met virtually with a representative of the local authority. Inspectors spoke with pupils, staff and parents.