

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Samantha Roach
Executive Principal
Tudor Grange Samworth Academy, A church of England School
50 Trenant Road
Leicester
Leicestershire
LE2 6UA

Dear Mrs Roach

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Tudor Grange Samworth Academy, A church of England School

Following my visit with Chris Stevens, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), Hazel Henson, HMI, Vondra Mays, Ofsted Inspector (OI) and Dick Vasey, OI, to your school on 24 and 25 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 to improve the school since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection that took place in October 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 those responsible for governance are taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Tudor Grange Academies Trust, the director of education for the

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

Yours sincerely

Rachel Tordoff
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 24 and 25 June 2021

Context

Leaders continue to implement their plans to improve the school. They have not been able to act fully on some parts of these plans due to the impact of the pandemic. For example, leaders have not made as much progress as intended towards improving the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

The pandemic has had, and continues to have, an impact on pupils' attendance. During the inspection, a significant proportion of Year 10 pupils were being educated remotely at home, due to COVID-19.

At the time of the inspection, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) was absent from work. Two leaders are temporarily covering this position, before they take up the permanent roles of SENCo and primary leader of SEND in September 2021. A new leader of the early years and a curriculum leader for information and communication technology have been appointed to join the school in September 2021.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Since the previous inspection, leaders have continued to improve the quality of education. They have introduced a more consistent approach to planning and implementing the curriculum. However, some of their plans to review and restructure the curriculum have been delayed due to the impact of COVID-19. Subject leaders in the primary and secondary phases have begun to work together to devise a curriculum that begins in the early years. In art, leaders have used their strong subject knowledge to plan an ambitious programme that focuses on the important knowledge and skills that pupils must know at each stage. In some subjects, such as English and mathematics, teachers use frequent checks of pupils' learning to modify their plans.

In the primary phase, leaders have started to put new curriculum plans in place. In history, for example, the curriculum follows a logical sequence and makes clear the fundamental knowledge that pupils need to learn at each stage. In the secondary phase, weaknesses in the key stage 3 curriculum are being addressed. From September 2021, the content of each subject studied by pupils in Year 9 will be at least as ambitious as the national curriculum.

Work to improve the curriculum is more advanced in the secondary phase. For instance, leaders have planned a programme for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education that helps pupils to recall key knowledge about, for

example, tolerance and harmful sexual behaviour. In contrast, the PSHE programme in the primary phase is less well planned. Leaders intend to deliver discrete PSHE lessons to primary-aged pupils in September 2021 to ensure that pupils are taught and remember important information.

Plans to improve the provision for pupils with SEND have not been realised. These pupils do not receive a high-quality education and their needs are not consistently well met. Teachers now receive information about pupils' needs but they do not all use this information to help pupils know and remember the curriculum. Some teachers do not check that pupils with SEND have secured the knowledge they need. Others plan work that is too easy. Almost all of the parents and carers of children with SEND who responded to Ofsted's survey, Parent View, expressed concerns about the support that their children are receiving.

Leaders have taken some steps to improve the provision for pupils with SEND. They have checked that these pupils' needs have been identified correctly. They have updated pupils' profiles and shared these with staff. Since the pandemic, leaders have supported pupils' social and emotional development, seeking help from external agencies when necessary. However, these improvements are recent and are not yet fully embedded.

The leadership of early years has changed several times. These changes have resulted in some inconsistent practice. The curriculum does not always identify what children should know at each stage. The activities that staff plan do not consistently build on what children already know, or link to what they need to know next. Although inspectors concluded that the school is taking effective action, they noted that the school seems to have 37 pupils in the Reception class with only one qualified teacher. This would seem to be a breach of the Schools Admissions Code 2014.

Parents say that children have settled back well into the early years following the most recent national lockdown. Children enjoy familiar routines such as story time. They can join in refrains that they have learned, such as 'Fee, fi, fo fum!' and explain what foods are good to eat and drink. Leaders, including trust leaders, have made sure that children who have slipped behind during lockdown have the chance to catch back up.

Staff know that it is important that children get off to a quick start with learning phonics. Staff use pure sounds accurately to help pupils break down words. However, the teaching of phonics is not consistent. Some staff do not always insist that pupils use their phonics knowledge to read unknown words. While pupils' reading books in Years 2 and 3 routinely match the sounds that they know, this is not the case in Year 1. Some staff do not always check that Year 1 pupils have mastered the sounds in their reading books so that they can read these books fluently before moving on. Leaders have ambitious plans to promote reading among

older pupils. In the new academic year, all secondary-aged pupils will benefit from a daily reading session, led by staff who have received appropriate training.

Prior to the pandemic, leaders were taking effective action to improve pupils' attendance. Unfortunately, the impact of COVID-19 has meant these previous gains have not been sustained. Since March 2021, the absence rates of pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils are too high. Too many pupils have not yet returned to school full time since the most recent national lockdown. Leaders are working hard with families to get pupils back into school regularly.

The school is typically a calm and purposeful learning environment. Most pupils want to learn and do well. They are polite and respectful and have responded positively to the new routines introduced due to COVID-19. Teachers and pupils told inspectors that behaviour is getting better. Pupils think that staff deal with incidents of poor behaviour fairly. Some pupils are required to work in the school's isolation unit because of their poor behaviour. These pupils do not always follow the same curriculum as their peers in class. The behaviour of pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils is typically not as positive as that of other pupils. Exclusions remain high for these groups of pupils.

A small number of pupils receive part of their education from alternative providers. These pupils generally attend these provisions well and have positive attitudes to learning. They follow programmes that are well matched to their needs.

The 'TUDOR' values underpin the school's work to promote pupils' personal development. Pupils have frequent opportunities to reflect, discuss and debate issues and ideas in a considered way. They told inspectors that the school is a welcoming and inclusive place to learn. Typically, one pupil said, 'We treat everyone the same, irrespective of any differences.' There are a wide range of activities on offer that enrich pupils' experiences and allow them to contribute to the school and their local community.

Staff, including those who are new to the profession, are very positive about working at the school. A large majority of staff think that the school is well led and managed. Leaders are considerate of staff well-being. For example, they have acted on recommendations from the well-being group to reduce staff workload.

Leaders of safeguarding are well trained. They work together effectively to ensure that no pupil is left unsafe. Leaders understand the context of the school well. They work closely with external agencies when issues in the local community pose a risk to pupils. Staff are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and know how to raise a concern about a pupil. They receive regular training updates on particular themes. Leaders keep detailed records of safeguarding incidents, including those related to sexual violence and harassment. They take swift action to ensure that pupils and families get the help they need.

Governors and trustees provide leaders with an appropriate balance of challenge and support. They have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors check what they are being told by leaders. They are aware that the pandemic has slowed down some of the school's improvement.

Priorities for further improvement

- Pupils with SEND do not benefit from a consistently high-quality education. Leaders must ensure that all staff support pupils with SEND in making secure progress through the curriculum.
- Pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils do not attend as well as they should. Leaders must revisit the strategies and procedures implemented before the pandemic so that the persistent absences for these groups of pupils reduce.
- The leadership of the early years has been through a period of uncertainty. Leaders must ensure that the new early years leader is supported well to plan and deliver an ambitious curriculum.

Additional support

The trust provides leaders with effective support. The chief executive officer knows the school well. She works closely with the executive principal to organise targeted support and training for the school. The trust has provided additional help and leadership capacity for the senior leadership team, the early years and the provision for pupils with SEND. Trust curriculum leaders have worked closely with school leaders as they review their curriculum plans, offering training and guidance.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents, including those relating to safeguarding. They met with the executive principal and other senior leaders, the designated safeguarding leader, leaders responsible for the provision for pupils with SEND, curriculum leaders including those responsible for art, history, and PSHE education, staff who are new to the teaching profession and the chief executive officer of the Tudor Grange Academies Trust. Inspectors observed some pupils reading to members of staff. They spoke with pupils, staff and parents.

The lead inspector met remotely with the chair of the local governing body, who is also a trustee. An inspector spoke on the telephone to representatives of four of the school's alternative providers.

Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 25 free-text responses, and to 60 staff questionnaires.