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Paul Yeomans
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Dear Mr Yeomans

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Springfield House Community
Special School**

Following my visit with Stephanie Moran, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) to your school on 10 March 2022, 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 third 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 third routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. We discussed the ongoing 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:

The school continues to be inadequate. Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The school may appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board (IEB), the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Alun Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 10 March 2022

Context

Since the last inspection, the deputy headteacher has left the school. One member of the interim executive board (IEB), who are responsible for governance, has left and has been replaced.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

The school continues to improve. Leaders have brought about many improvements in a measured and sensible manner. They have focused well on key priorities and have not tried to take on too much at any one time. The revised senior and middle leadership teams had only recently been in place at the time of the last monitoring inspection. These are now fully embedded. Consequently, the school has strong leadership capacity. It receives very little external support and improvement is led well by the school's leaders. The IEB plays an effective part in supporting leaders and in holding them to account.

The staff form a highly committed team. They are proud to work at Springfield House and morale is good. During this inspection, several staff were absent. Other staff filled in and supported leaders. The school ran normally despite the unusually high number of absent staff. Members of staff value leaders' care and support for them ensuring, for example, that their workload is manageable.

Parents are increasingly positive about the school. Several who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online inspection questionnaire, praised the school's leadership and the care that staff provide for pupils. A smaller number said that the school often employs supply staff because of absence. This is the case, but the school's use of supply staff has reduced greatly and continues to do so.

Pupils told inspectors that the school continues to improve. They enjoy school and they value the support that staff provide. They believe that leaders listen to their views and have made changes as a result. For example, following discussions in the school's pupil parliament, changes were made to the lunchtime menu and additional lunchtime activities were provided. Pupils are grateful for these changes.

The school's reading curriculum is now well embedded. Reading is taught consistently well throughout the school and pupils are making strong progress. For example, at the time of the first monitoring inspection in June 2021, all pupils had daily phonics lessons to help them read. Now, more than half of pupils have completed the phonics programme and are proficient readers. All pupils now have English lessons that build upon what they have learned in their phonics programme.

The mathematics curriculum continues to be effective. It is logically planned and helps pupils' knowledge to build from year to year. However, there remains work to be done before mathematics is taught as effectively as phonics.

At the time of the last monitoring inspection, leaders had just introduced a new personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. This is now well established. The week's theme is introduced by 'Sam', a member of staff who role-plays scenarios in an assembly. Pupils find this highly engaging. The theme is followed up in PSHE lessons. Pupils respond very well to this approach. They enjoy PSHE. They participate well in lessons, and they remember what they have been taught.

Leaders launched a new curriculum programme for most other subjects, including science, history, geography, design technology and art in January 2022. Pupils study a project for approximately six weeks. Each project includes clear subject-specific content. Projects have got off to a promising start. Pupils find them engaging and they are enjoying their learning. However, leaders have not made clear what pupils are expected to know and remember when they complete a project. This makes assessing pupils' learning more difficult. Leaders recognise that projects need to be reviewed and refined over the coming months.

The curriculum is now taught effectively throughout the school. However, variability remains also. There are occasional gaps in the subject knowledge of teachers and teaching assistants. The activities and resources used in lessons do not consistently help pupils to learn as well as they could.

The school is usually calm and orderly. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour remain common, but staff deal with them well. Pupils told inspectors, 'Staff help us to calm down when we need to.' Consequently, when incidents occur, they do not prevent other pupils from learning. The school has clear focus on building strong relationships and repairing them after incidents have been dealt with. Physical intervention is used appropriately. Sanctions such as suspension are also used appropriately and rarely. There is a good focus on giving pupils praise and rewards. Pupils respond well to this. However, at times, staff could be quicker to praise pupils' positive behaviour.

There remains a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Policies and processes are clear and used well. Staff put a great deal of time and effort into working with outside agencies, seeking the right support for vulnerable pupils.

Most pupils attend school regularly. Staff work hard to support the pupils and families of pupils who do not attend as regularly as they should. A very small number of pupils do not attend school at the moment, as they wait for a more suitable placement to be provided. Leaders provide education for these pupils remotely or via visiting tutors. Leaders are frustrated with how long it takes to secure alternative placements, even after the need has been identified at an education, health and care plan review. However, leaders have not made use of formal escalation procedures to express their concerns as often as they could.

The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is growing. Projects begin with 'memorable experiences'. Often, these are visits away from the school site. The pupil

parliament is now well established. Two representatives from each class were elected by their peers. A prime minister and deputies were elected following speeches they had made. Pupils are proud to represent their classmates. There is a growing number of lunchtime clubs. Almost half of all pupils attend chess club. Gymnastics and football clubs are due to begin soon. Leaders have secured 'health for life' funding. They intend to use this to purchase play equipment and to get pupils involved in growing and cooking fresh produce.

Additional support

The school now receives little external support. Leaders seek out advice, guidance and good practice as the need arises.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, pupils and staff. They visited several lessons, accompanied by leaders. They held telephone conversations with the chair of the IEB and a representative of the local authority.

Inspectors considered responses to Parent View, including written responses. They also considered responses from staff to their online inspection questionnaire.