

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



13 June 2022

Catherine McLaughlin
Headteacher
Lynsted and Norton Primary School
Lynsted Lane
Lynsted
Sittingbourne
Kent
ME9 0RL

Dear Mrs McLaughlin

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Lynsted and Norton Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 5 May 2022, 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 2021. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the second inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. I discussed the ongoing impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in my 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 the serious weaknesses designation.

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 Our Community Multi-Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Hanna Miller
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 5 May 2022

Context

Since the school's section 5 inspection in May 2021, the leadership of the school has changed. The substantive headteacher has been in post since September 2021. At the previous inspection the school was part of the Village Academy Trust (VAT). In June 2021, VAT merged with Potential in Everyone Academy Trust to form a new trust called Our Community Multi-Academy Trust (OCMAT). The interim headteacher at the previous inspection is the chief executive officer (CEO) of OCMAT.

The local monitoring council (LMC) disbanded shortly after the previous inspection and an interim governing board (IGB) was formed. The IGB will be in place until they form a new LMC. There are plans for this to take place in September 2022. Three members of the current IGB will take on positions in the LMC in September 2022.

There have been changes to staffing, including a new Reception teacher and a new key stage 2 teacher. There have also been changes to a small number of teaching assistants. There are a number of leaders from within the trust who have been working closely with the school to support the developments that have been taking place.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Leaders have demonstrated an ambitious, shared commitment to improving the quality of education at the school. They have worked together, led by the new headteacher, to drive important improvements across a range of areas. Leaders have clearly prioritised reading and the curriculum and are demonstrating improvements in these areas. Leaders have developed strong systems of monitoring and, as a result, are regularly making appropriate adaptations to their plans.

Leaders have prioritised the teaching of reading. All staff have received appropriate training to improve the teaching of phonics. Pupils start to be taught to read as soon as they begin school in Reception. The books that pupils are reading in school match the sounds that they have been taught. Pupils also enjoy taking books home to share with an adult. Pupils who show signs of struggling to read are identified quickly and provided with regular support. Many of these pupils are making rapid progress. However, not all staff have the detailed knowledge needed to support the weakest readers. This means that not all pupils receive support that is carefully matched to their needs. Some pupils therefore struggle to apply effective reading strategies when reading in other lessons. Leaders have recognised that additional training is required to ensure that all adults can support the weakest readers.

Leaders have made progress in developing the curriculum. They have adopted a curriculum that provides coverage of important knowledge across a range of subjects. Leaders are now in the process of precisely identifying what they want to teach in each

subject and when it will be taught. Some subjects, including early reading, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and history, are further developed than others. In history, leaders have carefully considered the key concepts that pupils will learn and how these link across different topics. They have also planned the key content and vocabulary that pupils will be taught. Pupils are able to confidently recall some of what they are learning and what they have been taught previously. Leaders will use the process that was successful in developing the history curriculum to train other subject leaders to develop their subject areas.

Pupils talk confidently about what they have been taught in PSHE. They demonstrate an age-appropriate understanding of the issues that are important to them, including inclusivity and online safety. They share their views and what they have been taught sensitively during discussions. Additionally, they respond to each other with kindness. Leaders have been responsive to the needs of pupils and where appropriate have made effective adaptations to the order of what is taught in PSHE.

The full curriculum is not yet being taught. At the time of the inspection, subjects including music, French and art were not being taught regularly. As a result, pupils' knowledge and understanding in these subject areas were limited. The wider curriculum therefore remains an urgent area for development. Leaders have plans to increase the breadth of subjects that pupils are taught to ensure that it is as ambitious as the national curriculum.

Leaders have focused on developing the learning environment to meet the ambitious plans in place for children in Reception. These plans provide appropriate focus on each area of learning. Leaders have thought carefully about language development through engaging children in a range of activities. Children demonstrate positive relationships with adults and with their peers. However, the activities that children take part in independently are not yet carefully matched to the needs of the children and to what leaders want them to learn. This means that some children are not being challenged or well supported during their independent learning time. There is further work to be done to ensure that all children benefit from the plans that leaders have in place.

Leaders are determined to improve the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) across the school. Careful monitoring and training have taken place to improve the support that pupils are being provided with. However, the provision for pupils with SEND remains a key area for development. Some pupils with SEND do not yet benefit from appropriate adaptations to the curriculum. In some foundation subjects, not all pupils are being supported to effectively access the curriculum and achieve well.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose. There is sufficient evidence to support leaders' accurate evaluations of their impact. Leaders have detailed plans to make further improvements with the support of trust leaders. The IGB includes knowledgeable professionals, who provide a range of skills to support the school. They have clearly defined roles and responsibilities and know the school well. They have appropriate

approaches to monitoring the progress of the school and understand the work still to be done.

Additional support

Leaders have welcomed support from a range of leaders within the trust. This additional leadership capacity has provided targeted expertise to help drive forward the much-needed improvements. The IGB continues to provide appropriate levels of both challenge and support to leaders at the school. The different layers of trust support and monitoring have contributed to improvements across each area for improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection.

Leaders and staff are making effective use of training and support from the local English Hub. This includes visits to the school and the sharing of resources to improve the teaching of reading. This has complemented the training provided by external phonics trainers.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, members of the trust leadership team and a range of subject leaders to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also met with the chair of the trustees, the chair of the IGB and the CEO. I reviewed plans to improve the school, including curriculum documentation and plans from the early years foundation stage, early reading, history and PSHE. I visited lessons and I met with pupils formally and informally. I also listened to pupils read.