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Amanda Woolmer
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Woolmer

Special measures monitoring inspection of Hartest Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 8 and 9 June 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 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 September 2021. 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 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 special measures.

The school's improvement plans are fit for purpose.

Having considered the evidence, I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust, the director of education for the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Adam Cooke
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 June 2022

Context

Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes to the governing body. Leaders and the trust have appointed a new chair and vice-chair to the governing body. They also sit on the governing body of another local school in the trust. There are two new parent governors and a trust governor. This was necessary to ensure more rigorous accountability of leadership. The executive headteacher remains in charge of the school, and trust leaders are currently recruiting a new head of school.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Leaders, governors and the trust have quickly established a culture of challenge and accountability in their relentless pursuit to improve the school. They have ensured rigorous systems of review and evaluation. These identify accurately how the school is improving and which areas of the school need further development.

Leaders have provided considerable training to staff to help them develop the subject knowledge they need to teach some areas of the curriculum effectively. This has had significant impact on the teaching of reading, especially in the early years. Teachers adopt a consistent approach which ensures that children learn sounds, blend words and develop fluency quickly. Leaders have matched the books that pupils read to the sounds they know. As a result, pupils now regularly practise their phonics knowledge. This helps pupils to read accurately and fluently. Leaders carefully check the quality of pupils' reading. They ensure pupils receive the precise support they need when they fall behind. In mathematics, knowledge is well sequenced so pupils potentially can learn well. However, leaders' checks highlight how some teachers need to follow mathematics planning more consistently. Some teachers need to break learning down into smaller steps and present knowledge more clearly to enable pupils to learn better.

While leaders have carefully selected the knowledge they want pupils to learn in phonics and mathematics, they have not precisely identified what they want pupils to learn in each year group and all subjects. As a result, the knowledge pupils learn does not build well on what they have learned before. In other areas of the early years curriculum, it is not clear what children are learning from planned activities. This is because teachers have also not clearly identified what it is they want children to learn. Leaders must ensure that teachers have a clear understanding of what knowledge pupils must learn in each year group.

Leaders have now established a system for reporting behaviour in the school which all staff follow. This helps leaders to check how pupils are behaving and to ensure appropriate support for those who need to change their behaviours. Most pupils behave well in and around the school. They are respectful to adults and visitors. Some pupils say a small number of pupils do not behave as well. However, teachers address this.

Since the last inspection, leaders and the trust have provided specialist training for teachers to understand how to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result of this, teachers say they feel more confident in this area. Leaders now provide staff with more detailed information about the needs of pupils with SEND. However, some pupils' needs are not accurately identified. This is particularly the case for pupils in receipt of an education, health and care plan. Leaders do not check carefully enough how well support for some pupils with SEND is working. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not receive the support they need to learn well.

Safeguarding is now effective. Leaders have created robust systems through which all staff can report concerns about a child's well-being. Staff have a clear understanding of how to report concerns. Leaders have trained staff to have up-to-date knowledge about the risks pupils face. Leaders ensure that they make appropriate referrals to outside agencies so that pupils receive the support they need. All pupils say they feel safe and can share concerns with members of staff.

Leaders, governors and the trust have constructed a well-considered improvement plan with clearly measurable targets and appropriate actions to address the areas for improvement. The multi-academy trust has provided the training and support necessary to ensure improvements in early reading, some curriculum planning and pupils' behaviour. Governors hold leaders to account in all areas of school life. There is capacity within leadership, supported by the trust, to ensure further improvement. Teachers appreciate the support they receive to help them improve their subject knowledge. They understand the need for change. However, there is still work to do to ensure that all teachers provide a high-quality education. As a result of this, it is recommended that the school does not appoint early career teachers at this time. Leaders concur.

Additional support

The multi-academy trust has provided training and support in curriculum development, especially in reading and mathematics. The trust has furthermore supported improvements in SEND provision, early years and safeguarding. Leaders have appreciated the impact of this work.

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the chief executive officer, the head of school improvement for the multi-academy trust, the executive headteacher, other senior leaders, representatives of those responsible for governance, staff and pupils. The inspector also spoke to parents when they came to pick their children up from school.