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20 November 2024

Miss Sarah Johnson
Executive Headteacher
Firs Primary School
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Dear Miss Johnson

Monitoring inspection of a school not in a category of concern of Firs Primary School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on Wednesday, 7 November 2024, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and took place because the school meets the monitoring threshold as set out in the [Monitoring Inspection Handbook](#).

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's key and (where applicable) provision judgements, but to identify and report on the school's progress. It is to highlight to the school and parents any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, Lesley Yates, Ofsted Inspector (OI), and I discussed with you and other senior leaders, the trust's chief executive officer (CEO), the Director of Primary Education, trustees, and the local authority the actions taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We also completed visits to lessons, meetings with subject leaders and support staff, reviews of pupils work in books, and other document scrutiny. I have considered all this in coming to my judgment.

Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but some aspects of the school need further improvement.

Main findings

There has been a significant change in the school's leadership since the last inspection. You took over as temporary executive headteacher at the beginning of this term and have contributed significantly to establishing a stable and consistent staff team at the school. A permanent substantive headteacher has been appointed and will take up the post in January 2025.

Since that last inspection, you and other leaders have worked tirelessly to develop the quality of education for pupils at the school. Training for all subject leaders has started to develop their understanding of what high-quality education should look like in their subjects. Subject leaders now know their subjects' relative strengths and weaknesses and understand how progress in their areas should be assessed. In some subjects, clear plans identify what should be learned, in what order, and how progress should be assessed. However, there is still work to ensure that all remaining subjects are sufficiently well planned and that all teachers know how to assess the progress made by pupils in those subjects.

As a result of the work done on new assessment systems, there is now a greater shared understanding of the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This means that staff better understand pupils' needs and how best to support pupils in class. You acknowledge that, due to the inconsistency with staffing in the past, some pupils have not always had their needs clearly identified and assessed quickly enough. However, recent positive changes and strong leadership within the SEND team are quickly changing this situation. You now rightly see consistency in how the curriculum is adapted to meet these needs as the next step in development.

Support from the multi-academy trust (MAT) has been welcomed and valued. Trust lead practitioners have supported the school in data analysis and moderation of pupils' work. Subject leaders from other schools have networked closely with your subject leaders to refine and develop curriculum design. The introduction of MAT's 'six circles framework' for teaching and learning has been particularly influential in developing a shared understanding of high-quality learning experiences. Trustees have a clear understanding of the journey the school has been on. They are rightly pleased with the school's developments but have equally set high, non-negotiable expectations for future improvement.

Your actions have also demonstrated tenacity in ensuring that areas that were strong at the last inspection remain so. The profile of safeguarding rightly remains your top priority. Supported by strong safeguarding and pastoral teams, you have continued to nurture and develop relationships with families so they can best support their children within the local community. A considerable focus on positive classroom relationships has maintained and enhanced pupils' engagement with learning. Consequently, pupils are often excited and eager to learn.

More recently, you have engaged with the Department for Education's school improvement offer and are building links with other organisations to help refine your assessment and moderation of pupils' work. You believe both will continue to provide additional support and challenge to further improve the quality of education.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the CEO of the Washwood Heath MAT, the Department for Education's regional director, and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Pollitt
His Majesty's Inspector