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20 March 2020

Mrs Nicky Baddeley
Principal
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Dear Mrs Baddeley

Special measures monitoring inspection of All Saints National Academy

Following my visit with Jonathan Leonard, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 3–4 March 2020, 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in May 2018. The full list of the areas for improvement that were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Lichfield, the regional schools commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Walsall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Heather Simpson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in May 2018

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, by:
 - swiftly clarifying roles and responsibilities for the leadership of the school
 - tackling quickly, systematically and effectively the weaker teaching which continues to inhibit pupils' progress
 - managing the performance of teachers effectively
 - developing the capacity to support and challenge leadership at all levels
 - improving both the core and wider curriculum so that planned learning successfully builds on pupils' prior knowledge and understanding, meets the needs and interests of pupils and enables them to make good progress
 - ensuring that the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities support them to make good progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better, by making sure that:
 - teachers are equipped with a deep understanding of how pupils learn and strong subject knowledge that will support them in delivering high-quality learning for all groups of pupils
 - all teachers plan a coherent teaching sequence which enables pupils to deepen and develop their skills and knowledge over time, building on prior learning
 - all teachers insist on high standards of presentation in pupils' work and tackle errors and misconceptions at the earliest opportunity.
- Raise pupils' achievements in reading, writing and mathematics, by making sure that:
 - pupils rapidly acquire and deepen their comprehension skills in reading
 - pupils have frequent opportunities to develop and deepen their skills in writing in a range of subjects and genres
 - teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to apply their calculation skills to investigate, solve increasingly challenging problems and develop their reasoning skills in mathematics.
- Work closely with parents so that attendance levels rise and fewer pupils are persistently absent.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 3 March 2020 to 4 March 2020

Evidence

Inspectors visited lessons with senior leaders and scrutinised documents. They met with the school's three assistant headteachers and subject leaders for reading, writing, mathematics and computing. Meetings were also held with the special educational needs coordinator, the safeguarding and attendance officer and a representative from the local authority attendance department. Discussions were held with groups of teachers and pupils. Inspectors also met with two representatives from St Chad's Academies Trust, and two members of the local academy committee. Inspectors heard pupils read and collected parents' views at the end of the school on day one of the inspection.

Context

At the time of this monitoring inspection, following an accident, the principal was on long-term sickness absence. One of the school's assistant headteachers has assumed the role of acting principal until the principal returns. Since the previous visit, two teachers have left the school and one has joined. A new teaching assistant has also been appointed.

The progress made by the school in tackling the key areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection

Leaders continue to work with determination to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the last full inspection. Their work is making a notable difference to the culture and ethos of the school for its pupils. Parents and carers comment on the improvements too. Leaders, trust members and governors are honest and accurate in their evaluations of the school's progress. They know where further work is needed and are taking action to ensure that remaining areas of weakness are quickly addressed.

School leaders and external partners have provided extensive training and support for all staff, particularly in English and mathematics. This has helped staff develop their subject knowledge in areas such as teaching phonics and planning mathematics more effectively. As a result, concepts and knowledge are now taught in the right order and pupils build on prior knowledge sequentially. However, the historical legacy of underachievement means that many pupils still have gaps in their learning. There are still too few pupils who have the appropriate skills and knowledge for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.

An annual plan sets out the themes that pupils will learn about in each year group. These are all based on a key text to help improve pupils' literacy skills. Teachers devise cross-curricular activities based on each theme. These activities are closely

matched to age-related national curriculum skills. However, planning does not yet demonstrate that teachers have considered how pupils build their knowledge and skills over time or revisit and consolidate their learning. For example, some year groups focus on a different subject area each week. This only represents a short amount of time given to some subjects and limited coverage of a targeted skill. Also, some activities for this term have yet to be planned in detail.

A secure programme for teaching phonics is now securely in place. Children in early years and key stage 1 have daily lessons to help develop their early reading skills. Letters and sounds are taught in the right order. Pupils also take home well-matched reading books to reinforce the sounds and letters they learn. Parent workshops are used to share information on how parents can help their children at home with reading and enlist their support. The most recent workshop was well attended and demonstrates leaders' success in engaging parents in their child's early education. Pupils' reading diaries show that most pupils read frequently at home and in school.

Increased time and support are provided for pupils who struggle with reading. Adults hear identified and targeted pupils read regularly. This is helping these pupils to catch up. Most pupils know their letters and sounds and can break down tricky words. However, a large number of pupils struggle to read with fluency and confidence. Leaders are aware of this and are continuing to focus on this aspect.

Older pupils are enjoying reading the class books that underpin their theme work. Pupils show increasingly good levels of comprehension. The structure in place for teaching reading enables them to develop their skills of retrieval, inference and deduction well. Pupils are encouraged to identify any words they do not know and to look these up in a dictionary. This is helping to expand pupils' vocabulary and improve their reference skills.

Improving pupils' writing remains a key priority for school leaders. Leaders have implemented a clear structure for teaching writing. This involves drafting, editing and improving their work. However, too few pupils are able to write at age-appropriate levels across the school. This is because basic skills are not developed well enough in early years and key stage 1 and expectations are not high enough. Too many children in early years are not yet able to form their letters correctly. Pupils in key stage 1 use unsuitable worksheets to practise their handwriting and spelling. Limited attention is given to producing good-quality and accurate sentences in pupils' independent writing.

The teaching of mathematics is well structured. Systems for assessing pupils are working well. Teachers know pupils' ability levels and plan work that is well matched to their needs. Most books are well presented. Content also shows good connectivity between what is taught and when. Pupils are taught the right things in the right order. Leaders monitor the planning and delivery of mathematics carefully. Nevertheless, although pupils are rapidly developing their basic skills, there is still

some variability in the quality of delivery of subject content. This means that standards in some year groups are not rising quickly enough.

Provision for pupils with SEND is much improved. Leaders are making it a priority to identify and provide additional support for individual pupils. Greater numbers of pupils are now benefiting from intervention programmes to develop their communication, reading, writing and mathematical skills and to help them achieve well. Increased numbers of pupils with significant and complex needs are also being referred to be considered for education, health and care plans. Leaders are working hard to ensure that these pupils receive the support they need.

One of the greatest barriers to improving pupils' academic achievement is the low attendance of a large number of pupils. Despite leaders' best efforts to offer rewards and incentives for regular attendance, some parents continue to take holidays during school time and do not send their children to school when they should. Leaders have had some degree of success in working with families to improve the attendance of individuals. However, the service provided by the local authority has failed to help leaders improve overall attendance or reduce the numbers of pupils who are persistently absent. This is due to a lack of stringent action and sanctions imposed. Very few parents have been prosecuted for failing to send their children to school in the last three years. Therefore, many parents continue to believe it is acceptable to keep their children at home or to take holidays in term time.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

All leaders are clear about their roles and responsibilities and they work together as an effective and united team. They have demonstrated strong leadership capacity during the temporary absence of the principal. They have taken on additional workload without hesitation to ensure that the school continues to move forward. This has been possible because of the high level of training and support they have been given previously by the principal. Their training has successfully equipped them with the skills needed to lead and manage the school in unforeseen circumstances.

Weaknesses in teaching continue to be eradicated. Regular monitoring, training and coaching have transformed the practice of some staff. Nevertheless, leaders continue to identify where further improvements are needed. Checks on teaching are carried out by school leaders and members of the trust. Feedback is provided to ensure that staff know precisely what they need to do to improve further. Staff feel very well supported and know that their hard work is beginning to pay off. They have collectively and readily taken on additional roles, such as leading different subject areas. These areas have been incorporated into their performance management targets and they are held fully to account for how their subject areas are developed.

Since the last monitoring visit, there have been significant improvements in the design and delivery of the curriculum. All national curriculum subjects are now taught. At the time of the last visit, computing was not offered due to a lack of equipment. Leaders have invested heavily in the resources required to deliver the subject well. All pupils now use computers for at least one hour a week and the curriculum is planned and sequenced across all year groups. The subject leader has clearly defined end points that allow teachers to check that pupils know the things they need to. Teachers are developing their subject knowledge by working alongside a computing specialist. Pupils, including those with SEND, produce work that evidences their rapid development in this subject area.

Feedback from the trust's work helps staff improve their practice. Regular board meetings also hold senior leaders fully to account for all aspects of school improvement. School leaders benefit from working in collaboration with other schools in the trust. The school has continued to receive effective support from the English hub for reading and phonics.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Leadership capacity has been significantly strengthened within the school. In the temporary absence of the principal, senior leaders have collectively, and successfully, risen to the challenge of leading and managing the school. Trust leaders have confidence in the ability of the leadership team. As a result, they have quite rightly begun to reduce the support provided so that leaders are less reliant on external support.
- Curriculum planning is increasingly well structured in the core subjects. Systems in place help staff plan lessons that build pupils' learning progressively, particularly in phonics and mathematics.
- Leaders have invested heavily in computing equipment and equipping staff with the subject knowledge and skills needed to teach this aspect confidently. All pupils from Reception to Year 6 now receive a well-structured sequence of learning in computing.
- An increasing range of interventions and support has been put in place to support pupils with SEND. Improved assessment and identification of pupils enable leaders to provide tailored and additional regular support for pupils, particularly in communication, reading and mathematics.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Attendance is stubbornly stuck below the national average and is not improving. Despite leaders buying in additional support from Walsall Council, there has been no impact from the support provided by the attendance department. Persistent absence is increasing. Parents are not being helped to recognise the importance

of sending their children to school regularly or the damage that repeated absence has on their child's education.

- Planning in some subjects, such as history, geography and science, is at an early stage of development. It does not take account of how pupils will know more and remember more over time.
- Standards in writing remain low in most year groups. Children in early years do not learn to form letters as early as they should. An overuse of worksheets in key stage 1 also limits pupils' ability to practise handwriting, spelling and sentence construction independently.

External support

The diocesan improvement adviser continues to provide regular checks and monitoring of teaching and learning alongside the trust. Feedback provided helps staff improve their practice. Regular board meetings also hold senior leaders fully to account for all aspects of school improvement. School leaders benefit from working in collaboration with other schools in the trust. The school has continued to receive effective support from the English hub for reading and phonics. The support provided by the local authority to improve attendance has been ineffective. Attendance figures remain well below the national average and persistent absent figures are rising.