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Marie Sandford CEO  
Inspiring Primaries Academy Trust  
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Dear Mr Read and Ms Sandford

### **Summary evaluation of Inspiring Primaries Academy Trust**

Following the summary evaluation of Inspiring Primaries Academy Trust (or 'the trust') in June 2022, when I was accompanied by Deirdre Duignan and Peter Stonier, Her Majesty's Inspectors, I am writing on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the findings.

Thank you for your cooperation during our visit to the trust on 13 to 16 June 2022. Please pass on our thanks to your staff and other stakeholders who kindly gave up their time to meet us.

The findings from the summary evaluation and a wider consideration of the trust's overall performance are set out below.

### **Summary of evidence gathering activities**

For stage 1 of this summary evaluation, six schools were inspected between 29 September and 30 November 2021. All these inspections were carried out under either section 5 or 8 of the Education Act 2005 (the Act), as amended.

The inspection outcomes were:

- Two section 5 inspections took place between 13 October and 27 October 2021. The two schools that were inspected and their overall effectiveness grades are set out below:

All Saints Church of England Primary School, Sapcote: Requires improvement  
Claybrooke Primary School: Requires improvement

- Four section 8 inspections took place between 29 September and 30 November 2021. The four schools that were inspected and their overall effectiveness grades are set out below:

St Margaret's Church of England Primary School, Stoke Golding: Good

John Wycliffe Primary School: Good

Sharnford Church of England Primary School: Good

Ullesthorpe Church of England Primary School: Good

Over the course of the on-site visit to the trust, discussions were held with you and other senior and operational staff. We met with a representative of the board of trustees. We visited three trust schools that had not been inspected during stage 1 of the summary evaluation process and two other schools which had been inspected. In each of these schools, we met with the executive headteacher, the head of school, other senior leaders, leaders responsible for subjects, teachers, pupils and a representative of the local governing body.

## **Context**

Inspiring Primaries Academy Trust is responsible for nine primary schools. The schools are located in Leicestershire local authority. The trust was established in 2013.

The trust's schools vary in size from 66 pupils in Claybrooke Primary School to 274 pupils in All Saints Church of England Primary School, Sapcote.

The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the trust is 15%, which is much lower than the national average (27%). The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) across the trust has increased by 6% since it opened in 2013, from 11.4% to 17.9%. This is slightly higher than the most recent national average figure of 16.4%, which was released in June 2022. The proportions of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND vary from school to school within the trust.

Six of the nine schools are Church of England schools.

The trust board is made up of seven trustees. This group is responsible for the strategic oversight and performance of the trust and its schools.

## **Main findings**

Currently, the inspection outcomes for the trust's academies, including the most recent inspections, are as follows:

- Five schools are judged to be good.
- Two schools are judged to be requires improvement.
- Two schools have yet to be inspected since joining the trust:

Dunton Basset Primary School joined the trust on 1 October 2018. When its predecessor school, Dunton Basset Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted in February 2018, it was judged to be good overall.

St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Bitteswell, joined the trust on 1 July 2017. When its predecessor school, St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Bitteswell, was last inspected by Ofsted in April 2013, it was judged to be outstanding overall.

### **Impact of the trust on its academies – governance and delegation**

- The trust leaders have set a clear vision for their schools. This is rooted in the mantra of a desire for pupils and staff at the trust to 'flourish' in their development. There is a sharp focus on helping all stakeholders to secure high levels of emotional well-being. Leaders want the schools to serve their communities with distinction and thrive. This is to maintain the tradition of providing a village education for pupils in the centuries to come.
- Senior leaders have developed trust-wide policies that provide strategic and operational support to schools. This enables school leaders to focus their attention on designing and implementing a curriculum that is ambitious for pupils.
- The trust's vision is well known by all stakeholders and is constantly communicated by senior leaders. The chief executive officer (CEO) is described by diocesan leaders as being 'the guardian of the flame' who ensures that the trust's vision is pursued in each school and across the trust. The unwavering ambition of the CEO is held in the highest regard by all of the stakeholders. School leaders are closely aligned with securing the vision and ambition in their schools.
- The trust leaders have appropriate systems in place to identify the strengths, relative weaknesses, opportunities and threats of each school in the trust. The detailed evaluations inform improvement planning for the trust and at individual school level. The plans contain details of suitable packages of support for schools, from both internal and external sources, to aid their development. This has helped most schools in the trust to provide a good quality of education.
- Trustees have a wide range of expertise and experience. This enables them to provide suitable levels of support and challenge to the CEO about the

performance of the trust and individual schools. Trustees are acutely aware of the particular contextual challenges of each school. They ensure that they are provided with resources and support so that school leaders are given every opportunity to overcome any particular barriers to securing improvement.

### **Impact of the trust on its academies – leadership and management**

- The CEO ensures that trust and school leaders are consulted and involved in developing key policies. This ensures that the policies are aligned with the values of the trust and are understood and agreed upon by stakeholders prior to implementation. Some policies are non-negotiable and are applied across all schools. However, individual school leaders value the opportunity to tailor and shape other policies in response to their context and setting.
- The CEO is a highly visible leader who is pivotal in the accountability process. The CEO holds executive headteachers and heads of schools to account for the implementation of policies, the performance of the school and alignment to the values of the trust. Trustees access a broad range of information to hold the CEO to account for the performance of the trust. In turn, members undertake their responsibilities assiduously when considering the impact of the work of trustees.
- The CEO attends local governing body meetings of each school. This helps to ensure that delegated responsibilities are being enacted, as well as providing support and challenge on the rate of improvement of individual schools. Governors value being able to access support provided by the chief financial officer in matters such as premises, health and safety and budgeting. This enables them to focus sharply on holding leaders to account for the quality of their work.
- New members of staff say that they were drawn to working in the trust due to the strong vision, values and ethos. School leaders and teachers speak highly of the opportunities they have received to develop professionally while working in the trust. The CEO has implemented a strategic approach to developing staff from starting as early career teachers to becoming executive headteachers. There is a clear succession planning model in place, where talent is spotted early. Allied to the work of leaders in ensuring that staff's workload is manageable, the package of support for teachers is a factor in the high retention rates of staff across the trust. This helps to promote consistency of practice.
- The CEO is an inspirational leader who knows each school inside out. A range of approaches are used to support the improvement of each school. School leaders welcome the cycle of peer reviews, which are an honest and robust evaluation of what is working well in their school and areas where improvement is required. The CEO leads the quality assurance role across the

schools. This is built upon a strong culture of collaboration and support for and from leaders so that there is a continual cycle of improvement.

### **Impact of the trust on its academies – curriculum and quality of education**

- Senior leaders have developed a curriculum overview, which acts as a 'guiding light' to ensure that the curriculum across the schools is consistent and aligned with the values and ethos of the trust. This has been informed by research findings on curriculum design and teaching. This provides an effective spine for the curriculum. School leaders are given autonomy to 'flesh this out' and make their own curriculum choices. This enables them to successfully address the specific needs of pupils in their local context.
- Subject leaders are responsible for curriculum development across the trust. They drive improvement through the conduit of working with coordinators from each school through a 'hub' arrangement. The hubs have proved successful in securing a consistent approach to implementing the curriculum and sharing effective practice. Not all of the subject meetings have taken place following the various national lockdowns caused by the pandemic. This is limiting the curriculum development of some of the foundation subjects.
- Subject leaders monitor the implementation and impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning. This helps them to determine in which schools, or subjects, further support is required. For instance, in music, while pupils are able to experience a wide range of musical activities, leaders identified that more time was needed for pupils to become proficient in developing their skills to play one instrument. Consequently, the curriculum was amended to enable this to happen.
- The trust has implemented a new assessment system, which helps leaders to check more closely on how well pupils are acquiring knowledge and skills in English and mathematics. This approach is rigorous and enables leaders to identify where support is required either at a school or subject level, for groups of pupils or individuals. This has helped to target interventions to ensure that pupils are able to catch up if they have fallen behind age-related expectations.
- Leaders accurately evaluate that their approach to assessment of pupils' learning in the foundation subjects requires further refinement. This is a priority for improvement across all of the schools in the trust.
- Leaders have identified that across the trust the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is an aspect of their work which can be refined further. During the pandemic, assessment of pupils' learning has shown that gaps in the knowledge and skills of this group of pupils have emerged. This is particularly the case in communication, language and

literacy. The trust has completed a review of its provision for pupils with SEND. Consequently, special educational needs coordinators have accessed training, supported by the trust's own educational psychologist, to enable them to provide more precise support to enable any gaps in pupils' knowledge to be addressed. This is beginning to have a positive impact in addressing this issue.

### **Impact of the trust on its academies – Behaviour and Attitudes**

- Senior leaders have implemented a trust-wide policy for managing pupils' attendance across all of the schools. This consistency of approach allows them to intervene to provide support when necessary. Also, families are treated equally regarding how the trust deals with any unauthorised absence.
- The trust has implemented a restorative justice approach for supporting pupils who may misbehave. Individual schools can implement bespoke policies, aligned to their context, for how they promote the positive behaviour of pupils. Across the trust, teaching and learning support assistants are deployed to support pupils' personal development during social times, such as lunchtime. This has helped to improve pupils' behaviour during this part of the school day.
- The CEO visits the schools on a regular basis and checks on the standards of pupils' behaviour. Leaders and staff working in schools consider that the trust's approach has helped them to secure good standards of behaviour. This has been verified by inspection findings in most schools across the trust.
- Trust leaders check their management information systems daily to consider individual cases and trends of suspensions. This enables them to respond swiftly if required. The trust is committed to inclusivity. As a result, suspensions are rare. Across the trust, there is no evidence of off-rolling pupils.
- The trust works closely with only one alternative provider. Suitable checks are made and monitored to ensure that the provision is supporting pupils to meet their individual targets as set out in their education, health and care plans.

### **Safeguarding**

- There are clear and well-understood processes in place to ensure that the arrangements for safeguarding in trust schools are effective.
- While responsibilities are delegated to local governing bodies, there is clear line of sight to trustees who monitor this aspect of the school's work through an audit process. Trust-wide policies relating to safeguarding are securely in

place. However, senior leaders in schools have the latitude to adapt this to suit their context to support pupils in their care.

- There are clear processes in place for trust leaders to check that schools have followed procedures in terms of children missing in education and the attendance of the small number of pupils who attend alternative provision.
- Across the trust, school leaders work with external agencies so that children and families who need any additional support can access it to help meet their specific needs.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum in each school for teaching pupils how to keep safe is flexible and responsive to need. A strength of the trust is the closeness to school communities and the development of relationships across all schools, which are a key part of its safeguarding work.
- The arrangements for safeguarding pupils were judged to be effective in all schools inspected during stage 1 of the evaluation.

## **Recommendations**

- The trust has recently introduced a new system for assessing the knowledge and skills of pupils in English and mathematics. However, the trust-wide system for assessment in other subjects is at an earlier stage of implementation. Therefore, senior leaders are not as fully sighted of the impact of the individual school subject curriculums on their pupils' learning. Leaders should refine their approach to assessing and checking precisely what pupils know and understand in the foundation subjects.
- The trust deploys subject specialist staff, using subject hubs, that help to disseminate good practice and share teaching resources to their schools. Some of these hubs are more established than others. Leaders should ensure that all subjects are given the time and appropriate platforms to share high-quality, subject-specific practice with all their schools.
- The trust has identified that there are gaps in the extent to which pupils with SEND are acquiring and retaining knowledge compared to their peers. While this gap has started to diminish, there is still more work to do. Leaders should continue to ensure that a range of effective support and staff training is put in place to help support pupils with SEND to achieve as well as their peers.

Yours sincerely

David Carter  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**





## Annex: Academies that are part of the trust

School Information				Most recent inspection		
URN	School name	Local Authority	Date joined trust	Does the inspection relate to the school in its current form?	Inspection date	OE grade
144108	Dunton Bassett Primary School	Leicestershire	01/10/2018	No	27/02/2018	Good
144110	Sharnford Church of England Primary School	Leicestershire	01/07/2017	Yes	16/11/2021	Good
144111	John Wycliffe Primary School	Leicestershire	01/06/2017	Yes	04/11/2021	Good
144112	St Margaret's Church of England Primary School, Stoke Golding	Leicestershire	01/07/2017	Yes	29/09/2021	Good
144113	All Saints Church of England Primary School, Sapcote	Leicestershire	01/06/2017	Yes	13/10/2021	Requires improvement
144114	Ullesthorpe Church of England Primary School	Leicestershire	01/06/2017	Yes	20/11/2021	Good
144115	Claybrooke Primary School	Leicestershire	01/08/2017	Yes	27/10/2021	Requires improvement

School Information				Most recent inspection		
URN	School name	Local Authority	Date joined trust	Does the inspection relate to the school in its current form?	Inspection date	OE grade
144116	St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Bitteswell	Leicestershire	01/07/2017	No	18/04/2013	Outstanding
139854	Gilmorton Chandler Church of England Primary School	Leicestershire	01/07/2013	Yes	15/01/2020	Good

\*Schools highlighted received either a section 5 or section 8 inspection in stage 1 of the MAT SE