

26 June 2019

Mrs Fenella Dowler-Luke  
Interim Headteacher  
RNIB Three Spires Academy  
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Dear Mrs Dowler-Luke

### **Short inspection of RNIB Three Spires Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 11 June 2019 with Chris Field Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in June 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since last inspection there has been a change in the leadership of the school. In April 2019, an interim headteacher was appointed. Currently, the school also has acting deputy headteacher and acting assistant headteacher. Both the acting deputy and assistant headteachers are long-standing members of staff and have been able to use their knowledge of the school to enable the headteacher to familiarise herself quickly with the school's current processes and systems. The interim headteacher has accurately evaluated the current effectiveness of the school and has begun to adapt the school improvement plan and self-evaluation documentation to reflect this. She has quickly identified priority areas for improvement and has already begun to address these.

The governing body show a clear and determined plan to develop their own practice in order to support the school further. They agree with the interim headteacher's evaluation of the school and are supportive of her actions. Staff are also very positive about aspects of the new leadership and welcome the opportunity for consultation and discussion. They recognise that the new leadership is making changes to benefit both quality of provision and work-life balance.

Very few parents responded to the online questionnaire. Some of those that did had

positive views about the school. They recognised the hard work of staff and gave individual examples of how staff have supported their children. However, some parents feel that communication from the school is insufficient, and some feel that their children have experienced too many changes in staff.

At last inspection, leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding to raise achievement, but this has not been achieved. Leaders were also asked to ensure that assessment is used to evaluate what pupils know and to set them work at the correct level of challenge; this is also an area that still requires improvement.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school systems and procedures for keeping pupils safe are effective. The designated safeguarding leads have the knowledge and skills to execute the school's policies and procedures with regard to safeguarding. They liaise effectively with outside agencies to ensure that families receive the support that they need. The school is involved in a new initiative to improve both communication and cooperation across multiple schools, particularly where siblings attend different schools. This is helpful as pupils come from a wide catchment area. The school has a thorough knowledge of its pupils and their families and does not hesitate to escalate concerns when required.

Governors are well informed about current safeguarding arrangements within school and carry out frequent checks for compliance. Risk assessments for individual children are up to date and are available within the class. However, staff are not always knowledgeable enough about the content of both risk assessments and individual plans to ensure consistent pupil management.

Policies and procedures regarding safeguarding are reviewed frequently and staff are aware of relevant policies, including whistle-blowing. Documentation reviewed showed that the school has responded appropriately to both safeguarding concerns and allegations. However, this documentation was not always well organised.

Leaders and governors fully understand the importance of recruiting safely. Governors ensure that they are properly trained to undertake the recruitment process.

The recent introduction of daily staff debriefs assists communication about individual pupils but also helps to ensure the well-being of staff. Through discussion, any changes in pupil circumstances can be identified and addressed swiftly and support offered to teachers if necessary. Leaders also use this time to reiterate their expectations regarding staff conduct, the implementation of the behaviour policy and safeguarding procedures.

### **Inspection findings**

- The needs of pupils within the school have changed overall, with more complex learners being admitted. The curriculum has not been adapted sufficiently well to support pupils who need to access the curriculum using more sensory

approaches. Currently teaching and learning lacks consistency.

- Where teaching is better, teachers adapt the activities to match the needs of their pupils. For instance, in the early years, teachers skilfully adapt their approach to the teaching of phonics to ensure that individual pupils make good progress. Teachers within the early years use physical and sensory approaches to ensure that all pupils can begin to link sounds and letters.
- The group sizes vary across the school. Sometimes, the large group size has a negative impact on the ability of teachers to manage behaviour and to respond to pupils' needs swiftly enough. Group sizes for the more complex learners are also sometimes too large and this can be a barrier to effective teaching and learning.
- Currently the strategic plan for both the curriculum and the school's approach to teaching and learning is currently unclear. The school has incorporated many different approaches and interventions to address the specific needs of pupils. However, the purpose of these numerous approaches is sometimes not transparent.
- The support provided by teaching assistants is variable in quality. Teaching assistants have received training in supporting communication skills but for some this is a new skill and it will take time to embed in their day-to-day practice. Occasionally teaching assistants have not fully understood the curriculum and have not responded flexibly enough to challenge pupils who are able to do more.
- The processes for assessment have been an ongoing priority for the school. Leaders recognise that assessment needs to respond to individual pupils to enable teachers to plan more effectively and to ensure that the curriculum is matched more closely to each pupil's needs, including the needs of the most able pupils.
- Leaders' monitoring has identified that the formal academic curriculum is better established than other parts of the curriculum, and this reflects the historic context of the school. They are introducing new elements to the curriculum to ensure that life skills and communication are given an equally high priority.
- The governing body and trust board work well in partnership and have an accurate view of teaching. However, they recognise that they have not always followed up agreed actions swiftly enough at governors' meetings. As a result, they have now taken measures to ensure that they review the impact of actions more thoroughly and frequently. They have sound understanding of what contributes to good teaching and learning and recognise that improvements are needed in some areas.
- The governing body has prioritised spending to purchase additional resources or approaches to support complex learners. However, currently the impact of these approaches is too limited. Communication boards have recently been introduced as well as 'now and next' boards. Leaders have identified that these approaches to communication are not yet established practice and that their use needs to be linked to individual pupils' plans.
- At the time of the inspection, the website was inactive, so no published information regarding pupil premium was available. Issues with the website are

being addressed. In the previous year, a considerable amount of money was prioritised to support communication as well as subsidising enrichment activities. However, currently there is limited impact from this spending. The monitoring of the pupil premium spend has not yet been robust enough to identify when actions are required.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is a greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning across the school
- there is a consistency in the quality of support provided by teaching assistants, particularly around the knowledge of the curriculum and how to provide effective support for communication
- the curriculum is developed to meet the changing needs of the school community, by ensuring that leaders have made appropriate decisions about group sizes and the use of visual tools and resources for communication
- they develop the challenge available to more able pupils by providing an individual curriculum based upon individual assessment outcomes
- the website is functioning so that key information is available to all stakeholders.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Coventry. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Susan Lowry  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

We held meetings with you to discuss the school's current evaluation and school improvement initiatives. Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leads to discuss safeguarding arrangements and to scrutinise the school's single central record. Inspectors spoke to the curriculum lead, met with a group of staff and spoke to representatives from both the governing body and the trust board. Inspectors examined a range of documents, including the school's current self-evaluation and development plan, safeguarding information, documentation associated with governance and reports from external advisers. Inspectors observed learning in all classes. There were no results from the pupil survey and insufficient responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, to make an evaluation. Seven free-text comments from parents were considered. There were eight responses to the staff survey.

