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7 October 2019

Mrs Rhian Richardson  
West Gate School  
Glenfield Road  
Leicester  
Leicestershire  
LE3 6DG

Dear Mrs Richardson

### **Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of West Gate School**

Following my visit to your school on 24–25 September 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and 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 was judged to have serious weaknesses in October 2018. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Leicester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Simon Hollingsworth  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in October 2018.**

- Leaders and governors must urgently address the weaknesses in safeguarding arrangements by:
  - ensuring that there are comprehensive records of the actions leaders take in response to safeguarding concerns
  - developing a record-keeping system that enables leaders to access information easily
  - informing relevant people of the actions that leaders take in response to concerns raised
  - analysing the frequency and circumstances of physical restraints so they can be reduced
  - maintaining a record of staff training for safeguarding so that staff who may have missed training can be offered further training
  - ensuring that the designated lead for safeguarding quality assures the work of the deputy designated leaders for safeguarding, so that school policies and procedures are followed to keep children, pupils and students safe
  - ensuring that governors receive appropriate training to hold school leaders to account for this area of leadership.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - taking swift action when weaknesses in teaching have been identified
  - ensuring that the leadership of mathematics supports teachers to improve the quality of teaching in this subject.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - using the information from assessments to set pupils challenging work, particularly for the most able
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge to solve problems
  - ensuring that teaching assistants are fully aware of pupils' personal targets in order to support pupils' learning
  - informing pupils of the purpose of their learning so they better understand why they are completing set tasks.
- Improve pupils' personal development by:
  - improving engagement in their learning by matching the activities to meet their needs
  - encouraging pupils to listen consistently to each other's views.
- Improve the quality of leadership and teaching in the sixth form by:
  - using students' assessment information from the end of key stage 4 to ensure that

- they are on the right courses and make good progress from their starting points
- checking students' understanding of what they are learning and using this information to plan the next steps.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 24–25 September 2019.

## **Annex**

### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with: the headteacher; senior leaders; curriculum leaders; groups of pupils; groups of staff; governors, including the chair of governors; a representative from the local authority; and an external consultant who is supporting the school. The inspector visited lessons across all the curriculum pathways and looked at pupils' mathematics workbooks. He reviewed a range of documentation that relates to the school's provision, including: self-evaluation and improvement planning; governance; and safeguarding. The inspector checked the school's single central register and the school's system for recruiting staff.

### **Context**

The headteacher joined the school in January 2019 as the interim headteacher. At the same time the deputy headteacher joined the school, also on an interim basis. Both were appointed to their substantive posts in the summer term, and took these posts up in September 2019. The chair of governors took up her post in July 2019.

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

Leaders have acted to improve the school's safeguarding procedures. They have improved how staff report, and leaders record, safeguarding concerns. They have ensured that all staff have received training so that they understand their safeguarding responsibilities.

Safeguarding leaders now keep detailed records of any concerns that they have about pupils' well-being. They have reviewed previous safeguarding records to identify any further action they need to take to support the most vulnerable pupils. Leaders have acted swiftly to resolve these concerns and provide the pupils with appropriate support. This has included regularly contacting these pupils' families, including during holiday periods. The detailed records they keep ensure that all safeguarding leaders know the actions taken to support pupils.

Senior leaders have ensured that staff know who the safeguarding leaders are. There is a rota that identifies for each day of the week the safeguarding leader who has primary responsibility for responding to any welfare concerns.

Senior leaders have introduced a red card system that staff can use to raise safeguarding concerns. Staff know that by showing a red card to a safeguarding leader, that leader will respond immediately. As a result, staff are confident that safeguarding leaders will act promptly to deal with their concerns. The red card system has raised the profile of safeguarding in the school.

There is a new referral form for staff to report their safeguarding concerns. The form provides clear guidance to help staff to do this. There is a section in the form that safeguarding leaders use to record how they have responded to the concern. This includes information about how they have supported the pupil and the feedback that they have provided to the member of staff who raised the concern. Staff are confident that they will receive feedback. They know what to do if they do not receive feedback.

The team of safeguarding leaders work closely together to ensure that pupils receive appropriate support. Weekly meetings enable the safeguarding leaders to have a precise understanding of current concerns, and to review how members of the team have responded. Two safeguarding leaders sign each referral form. This allows a safeguarding leader who has not been involved in responding to a concern to check that the action taken is appropriate.

Senior leaders keep detailed records of incidents involving restraint. They use these records to monitor the number and type of incidents. They use this information to provide further guidance to staff to support them in responding to pupils' behaviour. Senior leaders also review incidents to identify further support for pupils, to help them to manage their behaviour.

Staff have received comprehensive safeguarding training, including that which the local authority has provided. This includes the use of restraint and the administering of medication. They know to be vigilant of pupils' welfare, and that checking on pupils' safety is everyone's responsibility.

Leaders use the weekly staff meetings to bring to staff's attention any safeguarding concerns that they may have. In particular, leaders discuss any signs that they may wish staff to look out for regarding individual pupils' welfare. Staff agree that these meetings have encouraged a culture of vigilance. Such vigilance has enabled safeguarding leaders to provide prompt, effective support to vulnerable pupils.

Senior leaders have reviewed the school's curriculum to ensure that it best suits pupils' needs and matches the targets in their education, health and care plans. This review has led to the creation of three specific curriculum pathways for pupils to study; the horizons, futures and preparations pathways. Leaders have specifically designed these to provide a broad and ambitious curriculum that considers pupils' additional needs, and prepares them for their next steps.

The horizons pathway, for example, enables pupils with the most complex additional needs to develop their communication skills and build on their social and emotional development. The preparations pathway enables pupils to study across the full range of subjects. Through this pathway, pupils complete accredited qualifications. These include qualifications in mathematics, English, personal and social development, independent living and employability skills. These qualifications help prepare pupils and students for their next steps, including continuing their studies at mainstream colleges when they leave the school.

Leaders have used their knowledge of pupils' prior learning and their additional needs to match them to the right pathway. Staff report that pupils' engagement with their learning has improved since the introduction of these new pathways. They say that pupils have more positive attitudes because their learning is more appropriate to their needs. In the lessons the inspector visited, pupils focused well on their learning. They demonstrated positive attitudes. When there were class discussions about what they were learning, pupils listened to their teacher and to each other.

Leaders have assigned teachers and teaching assistants to specific curriculum pathways. This has helped leaders to resolve weaknesses in classroom practice and the support that pupils receive. By focusing solely on a particular pathway, teachers have been able to plan more confidently for pupils' learning. They are able to design tasks that are specific to pupils' additional needs and that build on what pupils already know. Furthermore, teaching assistants now have a sharper understanding of pupils' targets and how best they can support pupils to complete the tasks that teachers set.

In most lessons the inspector visited, teachers set tasks that built upon what pupils already knew, or that focused on the targets identified in the pupils' education, health and care plans. Teaching assistants supported pupils well to help them to focus on their learning and complete their work. In many cases, teachers and teaching assistants asked pupils questions to check their understanding.

Leaders recognise that these curriculum pathways are new, having only started this academic year. They recognise that there is still work to do to ensure that teachers teach these respective pathways consistently and effectively, so that pupils build upon what they know, and can achieve as highly as they should. Senior leaders have provided curriculum leaders with time to be able to provide support to teachers as they plan pupils' learning. Curriculum leaders have also begun to visit lessons to check that the work is suitable. However, this work is recent.

Senior leaders have appointed a curriculum leader of mathematics. This leader has reviewed the teaching of mathematics across the curriculum. He has identified what pupils must learn in each of the different curriculum pathways. In particular, he has focused on ensuring that pupils develop their understanding of mathematical concepts and their fluency in performing different calculations.

In planning pupils' learning in mathematics, teachers assess what pupils already know. They design activities that enable pupils to build upon their knowledge as they encounter new ideas. For example, pupils in a preparations pathway class considered how to subtract multiple numbers of the same value from a larger number. Pupils discussed how they could use their knowledge of their times tables to complete this task. Increasingly, pupils apply their mathematical knowledge to solving problems.

However, not all teachers know how best to teach mathematical concepts. They do not set learning that helps pupils to understand fully the concepts they are learning.

Students in the sixth form now complete their studies at the school, rather than at a local college. This has ensured that senior leaders know what these students are learning and how well they are achieving. Previously, this oversight was lacking. Teachers regularly check on students' achievement and adapt what they teach to ensure that the students achieve as highly as they should. Students also receive careers advice and guidance and opportunities to complete work experience placements. These prepare them well for their next steps.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management at the school**

Senior leaders have developed a clear vision of what they want pupils to achieve during their time at the school. They have ensured that all staff understand this vision. They have reviewed the school's curriculum, so that it fully reflects this vision and is suitably ambitious for the pupils. There is a determination among leaders, staff and governors that pupils' experiences at the school should prepare them well for their next steps. This includes the opportunity to develop the necessary skills to be able to live independently.

Senior leaders have taken effective action to resolve the weaknesses in the school's provision. Their plans for improvement focus appropriately on the key priorities that inspectors identified at the last inspection. Senior leaders regularly review their actions. This ensures that their actions are bringing about the necessary improvements.

Senior leaders have reviewed the roles and responsibilities of the curriculum leaders. They have ensured that these leaders have led on the design of the new curriculum. Curriculum leaders have received support and guidance, both from senior leaders and from an external consultant. This has ensured that they have the knowledge and skills to design the new curriculum pathways effectively. Senior leaders have also provided curriculum leaders with time to check that teachers are teaching the new curriculum well.

The governors bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to their roles. Through their own professional and personal experience, the governors understand the different types of special educational needs, the nature of special provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and the features of effective safeguarding. Governors use this knowledge well to challenge senior leaders.

Governors receive regular, detailed information from the senior leaders about their work to improve the provision. They check on the school and receive reports from a consultant. As a result, governors have a precise understanding of the impact that leaders' work is having on improving the quality of the provision. They use this knowledge well to provide senior leaders with effective challenge and support. Governors are united in their ambition for the school and their determination that senior leaders should bring about the necessary improvements to the school.

### **Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- Senior leaders have taken swift and decisive action to resolve the weaknesses in the safeguarding procedures that inspectors identified at the last inspection.
- There are now robust procedures in place for recording any concerns that staff may have about pupils' welfare. Records show that safeguarding leaders take prompt, effective action to respond to any concerns.
- Staff who have passed on concerns receive feedback regarding safeguarding leaders' actions to support the pupils.
- Training in safeguarding has ensured that there is now a culture of vigilance among staff. Staff know how to check on pupils' welfare and how to pass on any concerns that they may have. They know that safeguarding leaders will promptly deal with any concerns that staff bring to their attention.
- Senior leaders have reviewed the curriculum that pupils study, so that it is appropriate to their additional needs and matches the targets within their education, health and care plans.
- Staff report that the new curriculum pathways have enabled pupils to focus more effectively on their learning. This has ensured that pupils adopt positive attitudes to their education.
- Teachers have grown in confidence in their classroom practice. They plan learning that helps pupils to build on what they already know.
- Teaching assistants have developed a secure understanding of what pupils are expected to learn. They provide effective support to help pupils to achieve their individual targets.
- The curriculum leader for mathematics ensures that pupils receive sufficient opportunities to become secure in their understanding of mathematical concepts and calculations. Pupils now apply their mathematical knowledge to solve problems, when this is appropriate.
- All sixth-form students now complete their studies at the school. This has ensured that senior leaders have a comprehensive oversight of the quality of education that these students receive. Teachers regularly assess students' achievement. They use this information to adapt students' learning. Students receive appropriate support to prepare them for their next steps when they leave the school.



### **Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- Not all teachers are secure in their subject knowledge, including in mathematics. Some teachers do not understand how best to teach new concepts so that pupils build on what they already know and can apply this knowledge successfully.
- There has been a significant increase in staff's workload as the school has addressed previous weaknesses. Senior leaders understand the impact that this increased workload has had on staff's well-being. They listen to any concerns that staff may raise, and have provided further support and guidance. Leaders know that there is further work to support all staff to manage their workload.
- The new curriculum pathways that pupils study have only been in place since the beginning of this academic year. There is further work necessary to ensure that there is consistency in the teaching of these pathways across the different classes, so that pupils achieve as highly as they should.

### **External support**

Senior leaders have engaged well with external support to help them resolve the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. Senior leaders and staff, for example, have worked with local special schools. This has allowed them to learn from the best practice of other professionals. This support has reduced as leaders and staff have become more secure in their work to improve the school.

Senior leaders have also engaged well with a professional external to the school. This consultant has provided sharp guidance regarding the strategies that leaders should adopt to ensure that safeguarding procedures are robust. She has also worked closely with curriculum leaders to ensure that their development of the new curriculum pathways is comprehensive. The consultant regularly checks on the effectiveness of leaders' actions to bring about the necessary improvements. Leaders have responded quickly to any further weaknesses that the consultant has identified. Senior leaders have benefited greatly from this support.