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Debbie Allen
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Allen

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Rumboldswyke CofE Infants' School

Following my visit to your school on 14 November 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 May 2019. 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 actions 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 interim executive board, the director of education for the Diocese of Chichester, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for West Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kathryn Moles
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in May 2019

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the designated leaders for safeguarding are fully trained and that safeguarding training is kept up to date
 - all staff receive high-quality training so that they know exactly what to do should they have a concern that a pupil is at risk of harm
 - leadership at senior level is strengthened
 - leaders receive appropriate training and development that enables them to take on their roles effectively and efficiently
 - there is a thorough review of the school's strengths and weaknesses and that plans for improvement focus clearly on what the school needs most to improve
 - the curriculum allows pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that all pupils make rapid and sustained progress in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve
 - ensuring that work is pitched at the right level so that all pupils, especially the most able, make good progress
 - making sure that pupils routinely apply their phonics knowledge to read unfamiliar words
 - improving teachers' subject knowledge so that they can more successfully probe and extend pupils' learning
 - making sharper use of assessment information to plan work that builds on what pupils already know and can do.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 14 November 2019

Evidence

I met with the headteacher to discuss work to improve the school since the last inspection. Together, we reviewed safeguarding arrangements and visited classrooms to see the impact of leaders' work. I spoke with a group of pupils from Years 1 and 2 and with most of the staff at lunchtime. I met with two members of the interim executive board, including the chairperson, and with representatives of the local authority and diocese. I also took account of 26 responses to the Ofsted Parent View online survey and six letters handed in to the school office. During my visit, I focused on safeguarding and leaders' work to raise standards in the school.

Context

Since the last inspection, the headteacher, deputy headteacher and several other members of staff have left the school, one very recently. The current headteacher joined the school in September 2019 on a part-time temporary basis. She is also the headteacher of another local school. The senior teacher joined the school at the same time, also on a temporary part-time basis. The governing body has been replaced by an interim executive board (IEB), which first met on 1 October 2019. The school is currently undergoing a consultation about its future, along with four other West Sussex schools. The number of pupils on the school roll has continued to fall.

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

Leaders have wasted no time in addressing the weaknesses in safeguarding arrangements. Staff have received rigorous training. As a result, they understand their duties and carry them out with confidence. Their ongoing conversations about safeguarding help to keep their knowledge fresh in their minds. This rigorous approach supports the ethos of care and nurture that is a key feature of this school. Pupils describe each other as kind, helpful and friendly. Parents are confident that their children are kept safe and cared for very well by the school's dedicated staff.

Deficiencies in the leadership of safeguarding have been addressed. Leaders have received timely training that equips them suitably for their role. Policies, systems and record-keeping have been updated and are fit for purpose. Leaders make good use of links with the headteacher's base school to provide useful cover if none of the school's designated safeguarding leads are available. This provides a helpful safety net for both schools.

The headteacher has got to know the school quickly and recognises the potential for improvement. Her leadership gives staff confidence to develop their work. The senior teacher supports staff well by modelling good practice to others. Staff make

sure that classrooms are stimulating places for pupils to be. Teachers' raised expectations have put the emphasis back on learning. As a result, pupils' behaviour is improving and being managed successfully.

Work has begun to improve pupils' learning in English, mathematics and the wider curriculum. Teachers are beginning to assess pupils' ongoing learning more accurately. They are starting to use this information well to inform their planning for pupils' future learning. Reading resources have been refreshed. This is encouraging pupils to read more widely and often, so that they can practise using their phonics skills. Leaders can see the impact this has already had on the standards pupils reached in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of the last academic year. It is also evident in the improving quality of the work in pupils' 'learning journals'.

Leaders have revised long-term subject planning, to ensure that pupils experience a sufficiently broad curriculum that captures their interest. For instance, a recent 'teddy bear's picnic' topic included geography, design technology, writing and reading for a purpose. Pupils' enthusiasm was clear when they told me about the learning activities they had enjoyed taking part in. They could also identify how the topic had helped their wider personal development, encouraging them to be kind and look after the teddy bears they had made. Currently, leaders are early in their work to ensure that learning in each subject builds successfully over time.

The effectiveness of leadership and management at the school

Since they joined the school in September, the impact of the headteacher's and senior teacher's work cannot be overstated. Their clear direction, support and training are enabling staff to build their confidence and expertise. Staff are determined and keen to do their absolute best for pupils. Consequently, standards are rising. Parents trust leaders to address the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. They expressed their confidence emphatically in the letters sent in during the inspection.

Members of the IEB bring suitable expertise and experience to their roles. They have a clear understanding of their purpose – to focus on the quality of provision for pupils in the school and hold leaders to account for the impact of their work. They have done some early work in this area, such as supporting leaders to audit the quality of safeguarding arrangements. As a very recently formed group, board members know they need to accelerate the pace of their monitoring work, in order to support rapid school improvement successfully. Board members recognise the importance of engaging parents in this process, so that they better understand the job the IEB is there to do.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Everyone connected with the school is determined for it to improve. Staff are responding enthusiastically to the investment in their training and development, which is having a positive impact on pupils' learning.

- Senior leaders have secured the confidence of pupils, parents and the local community. This is helping the school to move forward successfully towards a common goal.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The IEB's role, to assure the quality of education, has not been entirely clear to all parents, undermining some parents' confidence in its effectiveness.

External support

The local authority's role in recruiting the headteacher has been critical in stabilising the school's leadership. The resulting link with the headteacher's base school, Bosham Primary, is supporting work to develop the quality of teaching and learning at Rumboldswyke. By working together where they can, staff benefit from the opportunity to share and develop their expertise, such as when planning learning activities for pupils. Staff value this training hugely. The impact of this work is evident in leaders' and teachers' emerging plans for the wider curriculum at Rumboldswyke.

Advisers from the diocese and local authority are keeping a careful eye on standards in the school. They work together where they can, so that feedback to school leaders is consistent and helpful. This gives leaders a useful check on the difference their work is making to pupils' experiences at the school.