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Mr Paul Walsh
The Park School
Onslow Crescent
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Dear Mr Walsh

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of The Park School

Following my visit to your school on 3 December 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 March 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 governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Surrey. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Maxine McDonald-Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Immediately take action to protect pupils from the risk of harm by:
 - ensuring that all statutory recruitment checks on new staff are completed
 - carrying out thorough checks and risk assessments before placing pupils in alternative provision
 - following the correct procedures to report pupils who are missing from education, including only taking pupils off roll when guidelines are met
 - evaluating the use of physical intervention and improving the recording and monitoring of such incidents
 - eliminating the inappropriate use of part-time timetables, flexi-school agreements and home-education agreements so that all pupils receive the full-time education to which they are entitled
 - ensuring that those responsible for governance discuss and approve policies relating to safeguarding, checking that they are fit for purpose.
- Improve the impact of leadership and governance by:
 - checking that governors with responsibility for safeguarding and whistleblowing are impartial and aware of their roles and responsibilities
 - ensuring that senior leaders focus purposefully on their role in leading education, including through strengthening the quality of school improvement planning
 - ensuring that the governing body has impartial members who can challenge leaders about all aspects of the school's work
 - making sure that governors are not overly reliant on what school leaders tell them, for example through making good use of visits to the school
 - ensuring that leaders and governors develop an appropriate pupil premium strategy, and that governors closely monitor and evaluate its success and the success of any other strategies funded through additional resources.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 3 December 2019

Evidence

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, senior leaders and the school council. I also met with members of the interim executive board (IEB) and a representative from the local authority. During this inspection, I focused on the areas for improvement relating to safeguarding. I evaluated how well leaders had taken immediate action to protect pupils from the risk of harm.

Context

After the last inspection, the local authority replaced the governing body with an IEB. At the time of the last inspection, the school had two co-headteachers, one of whom retired at Easter. The current headteacher became the sole headteacher in April 2019. The deputy headteacher also joined the school at this time. Since the last section 5 inspection, leaders and the local authority have been in discussion with a local multi-academy trust. There are plans in place for the school to close and reopen as an academy imminently.

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

Leaders have acted swiftly to ensure that pupils are safe. They have successfully overhauled safeguarding systems and procedures in the school. The new systems are reporting improvement. Information is now recorded clearly. Leaders now understand exactly what checks are needed when staff join the school. The improvements mean that thorough checks are now reliably carried out on any new staff.

Currently, there are no pupils who are using alternative provision. However, this may not remain the case. Leaders now have clear, robust procedures in place to ensure that pupils in alternative provision are safe. These involve detailed, relevant risk assessments before any pupil begins attending alternative provision, and regular monitoring while they are there.

Leaders now have an accurate understanding of procedures relating to pupils' attendance. Leaders have introduced a new system which helps them to analyse pupils' attendance effectively. As a result, pupils' attendance is being monitored closely by senior leaders and any patterns of absence are being noticed and acted upon. Pupils' attendance is currently high.

All staff have received useful training, since the section 5 inspection, about how to help pupils to manage their own behaviour effectively. Staff have developed a clear understanding that using physical intervention to keep pupils and staff safe is

always a last resort. Instances where staff have to physically intervene are now very infrequent. Senior leaders have received additional training so that if they do need to use physical interventions, they know how to do so safely. Leaders have introduced systems which ensure behaviour incidents are now recorded clearly and accurately. Incidents are now evaluated and everyone involved is well-supported, with time to reflect. Leaders are ensuring that information gathered is then used to inform risk assessments, so that the chances of a similar incident happening again are being reduced.

Pupils are receiving the full-time education to which they are entitled. Leaders' new approach is placing the pupils at the centre of curriculum planning. This is resulting in pupils beginning to learn a wider range of engaging subjects which meet their individual needs well. As a result, no pupils are currently on part-time timetables.

Members of the IEB are highly skilled and knowledgeable. They are providing leaders with invaluable support, guidance and challenge, particularly in ensuring that pupils in the school are safe. The IEB is confidently overseeing the introduction and establishment of new, improved policies and procedures related to safeguarding.

The effectiveness of leadership and management at the school

Since the last inspection, the headteacher and deputy headteacher have worked extremely hard to begin making the much-needed improvements across the school. Their swift action to eliminate safeguarding risks has had a positive impact. They are now determined to ensure that pupils will receive the outstanding quality of education that they formerly did at the school. Senior leaders are introducing a new way of monitoring pupils' progress in all areas of their lives. Leaders intend that this information will be used to plan provision for individual pupils. Although it is too early to see the positive impact of this approach, staff are already describing its potential as a powerful way to get to know and fully understand pupils' needs.

The recent overhaul of systems and approaches is leading to all staff receiving relevant and useful training. Leaders understand the need to ensure that all staff fully understand the reasons behind new approaches and securely develop the skills needed to work effectively. Leaders have clear plans in place for future further training.

Leaders' self-evaluation is now accurate and incisive. They are ensuring that the school's improvement plans focus clearly on the areas for improvement identified during the section 5 inspection. The plans are detailed, effective and illustrate leaders' in-depth understanding of the improvements needed in their school. Timings to achieve targets are aspirational, and leaders' drive to achieve these since the last inspection has been impressive. The IEB is playing a pivotal role in supporting and challenging leaders effectively. Leaders are rightly thinking ahead to when the school becomes an academy, but they are definitely not waiting for this to

happen before striving to improve provision for pupils.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Leaders, in particular the headteacher and deputy headteacher, have acted with insight and speed in securing the needed improvements.
- Leaders have begun to ensure that pupils' families are fully involved in their children's education. The family liaison worker is playing a key role in improving communication between school and home.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Leaders understand the need to embed recently improved systems and ensure that all staff are fully involved in this. Currently, senior leaders are carrying out the day-to-day operation of improvements across the school. For example, senior leaders monitor individual pupils' attendance when this could be completed sooner by staff such as tutors, for example.

External support

Leaders have received invaluable external support. This has primarily been recommended by the IEB. Leaders have acted positively on suggestions and guidance from a leader of an outstanding special school and from an expert in how to work effectively with disadvantaged pupils. This guidance has helped leaders to make decisions about how to improve and shape provision in their school. Recently, the local authority representative has provided leaders with regular dialogue which has allowed them to effectively develop their ideas.