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25 February 2020

Steve Bowhay
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Dear Mr Bowhay

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Park Vale Academy

Following my visit to your school on 4 February 2020, with Imtiaz Patel, Ofsted Inspector, 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 June 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 trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of Redhill Academies Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Nottingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jayne Ashman
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the impact of the leadership of the school by ensuring that:
 - the rate of improvement is quickened across the school and strategies lead to better achievements for pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND
 - all staff understand and carry out their safeguarding duties and that all relevant employment checks are completed on staff joining the school
 - leaders evaluate the effectiveness of introduced improvement strategies to ensure that they know which ones work and which ones do not
 - leaders routinely analyse and monitor information they collect about pupils to be able to spot any trends or patterns quickly, particularly concerning pupils' absences, behaviour incidents and pupils who leave the school roll
 - governors are trained effectively, and their skills developed so that they can fulfil their delegated duties
 - leaders routinely evaluate that the additional funding the school receives has a positive impact on the outcomes of those groups of pupils it is intended for
 - leaders of the SEND provision have an accurate overview and make sure that pupils make the progress of which they are capable.
- Improve teaching, so that pupils make consistently good or better progress, by ensuring that teachers:
 - have high expectations of all pupils and what they can achieve, particularly in mathematics and history
 - take full account of pupils' needs and abilities so that learning is neither too easy nor too difficult
 - provide tasks that stretch and challenge the most able pupils so that they make the progress they should
 - ensure that tasks are well planned to match pupils' needs so that they do not become disengaged or waste valuable learning time.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that all teachers:
 - consistently and fairly apply the school's behaviour policy so that pupils' learning is not inhibited

- are sufficiently skilled and knowledgeable to teach the PSHE programme, so that pupils have a greater understanding of important issues.
- Reduce the amount of time some pupils, particularly the disadvantaged, miss from school because of being persistently absent or excluded for a fixed period.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 4 February 2020

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documents, including the Ofsted statement of action, the school improvement plan and leaders' self-evaluation.

Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, members of staff and groups of pupils. They also spoke with governors. The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of the trust. The reintegration centre was visited. An inspector observed pupils in the isolation provision. Inspectors observed pupils' arrival to school and behaviour during breaktime and lunchtime. They visited lessons with senior leaders.

This monitoring inspection focused on aspects of leadership, management and safeguarding. It focused on features of personal development, as well as behaviour and attitudes.

Context

Since the previous inspection, a deputy headteacher has left the school. The leadership team has been restructured. There have been changes to the leadership of safeguarding, behaviour and attitudes, personal development and the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). An executive headteacher is providing leadership support. There have been some staff changes.

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

Since the previous inspection, leaders have improved the arrangements for safeguarding. A revised safeguarding policy is in place. Staff receive appropriate training, including from the trust. Members of staff who spoke with inspectors were familiar with the safeguarding policy and how this should be implemented. For example, they understand the steps to take if a pupil discloses a concern.

The single central record of staff is complete and now meets requirements. Suitable checks have been undertaken to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children. Appropriate risk assessments are in place.

There is new leadership of pupils' safeguarding and welfare. Leaders have improved the use of the electronic system to record safeguarding concerns. However, some records still lack detail. It is not always clear what actions leaders have taken to support pupils when concerns have been raised.

Leaders have begun to improve the quality of education. They have looked at how well the curriculum is planned and sequenced in all subjects. This work is very much in its infancy and leaders recognise there is more to do. They are taking steps to ensure that the quality of education is consistently strong in each curriculum area. Curriculum planning, sequencing and implementation in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages have improved. This is not the case in physical education and design and technology. Pupils told inspectors that some of their lessons are getting better, but not all of them.

Leaders have put training in place for staff to ensure that staff implement the curriculum effectively. This includes subject-specific training and coaching from subject directors in the trust. Teachers told inspectors that they appreciate these opportunities and the support they receive from leaders. Leaders know that there is more to do to ensure that the curriculum is sufficiently ambitious for all pupils, including those with SEND and disadvantaged pupils.

In 2019, pupils' outcomes improved significantly. A greater proportion of pupils attained a standard pass in English and mathematics. More pupils also attained a good pass in these subjects than previously. A greater proportion of more able pupils achieved as they should. More gained the grades they required to move to the next appropriate step in education, employment and training.

Many pupils behave well in lessons and around the school site. Pupils that have experienced exclusion told inspectors that they appreciated the support that they received on their return to school. Repeat exclusions have notably reduced. However, the behaviour policy is not ensuring that all pupils conduct themselves as they should. The number of lesson 'on-calls' due to poor behaviour is too high. Too many pupils miss their lessons.

Attendance is improving, but not for all pupils. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are routinely absent continues to be too high. Due to the vigilance of staff, the proportion of pupils arriving late to school has reduced. Pupils arrive to school in an orderly fashion. They are courteous and are smart in their uniform.

The effectiveness of leadership and management at the school

The leadership and management of the school is improving. There is more to do to ensure that all aspects of leadership are as effective as they could be

Since the previous inspection, the deputy headteacher has taken charge of the pupil premium strategy and the provision for pupils with SEND. Leaders have planned an external review of the impact of pupil premium spending. They have revised the pupil premium strategy. The strategy to support pupils with SEND is beginning to have a positive effect on the support in place for these pupils.

Leaders have ensured that appropriate planning is in place to address the areas of weakness identified at the previous inspection. They keep checks on the impact of their actions. Their monitoring and evaluation, for example of pupils' attendance, behaviour and isolation, are not as sharp as they could be. This means that action plans lack the precise information needed to inform next steps.

New leaders have begun to improve pupils' behaviour and attitudes, safeguarding and personal development. There is now more capacity to develop these aspects of the school's work. However, the leadership of these areas is not as strategic as it could be. For example, leaders do not analyse the reasons why some pupils are frequently placed in isolation. This means they cannot be sure that they are doing all they can to reduce the causes of pupils' poor behaviour. Too many pupils are still routinely absent from school. Leaders do not evaluate the patterns of pupils' absence or the impact of their actions to reduce absence.

Governors are committed to the school but rely too much on the information received from leaders. They have not held leaders to account well enough to ensure that behaviour and attendance improve quickly.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Leaders have rectified the safeguarding issues identified at the previous inspection.
- Leaders have increased the proportion of specialist teachers. The quality of education is improving in some subjects.
- There is more leadership capacity to improve pupils' behaviour and attitudes, personal development and safeguarding and welfare.
- The leadership of pupils with SEND and the pupil premium has improved.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The quality of local governance needs strengthening.
- The curriculum is improving but not in all subject areas.
- Too many disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND are routinely absent. Too many of these pupils are removed from lesson or placed in isolation.
- Leaders' analysis and evaluation are not strategic enough to inform effective improvement planning, including by governors or the trust.