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Eileen Rogers
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Dear Ms Rogers

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Gorse Ride Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 11 February 2020, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring 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 to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- Improve the recording and analysis of attendance concerns to support the identification of reasons and patterns, and thereby inform the support and challenge provided in individual cases and the development of school policy and provision.
- Ensure that continuing priorities for improvement are pursued with suitable urgency.

Evidence

During this inspection, I met with the executive headteacher, deputy headteacher, both assistant headteachers and the inclusion manager. I visited lessons with leaders. Together with leaders, I examined pupils' work and discussed this with the pupils concerned. I met with the chair of the governing body and two other governors. I discussed the school's improvement with a representative from the local authority. I considered a range of documentation, including leaders' improvement plans and their evaluation of the school's improvement so far. I examined the central record of recruitment checks and discussed procedures with the member of staff who maintains it. I spoke with parents and carers bringing their children to the school in the morning.

Context

In 2019, leaders were unsuccessful in recruiting a substantive deputy headteacher to the vacancy which occurred from Easter. The post was unfilled until the start of this term. Since the start of this term, permanent job-share arrangements have been in place for a single deputy headteacher role covering both schools in the federation. The post-holders are long-standing members of staff. Two assistant headteacher roles were introduced in September 2019, working across the federation. A mathematics leader was appointed from within the school staff, in September 2019.

Main findings

You have made sensible changes to leadership arrangements over the last nine months. The appointments you have made are enhancing leaders' capacity to accelerate improvements in the curriculum and teaching, and in learning for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). You have ensured that new leaders have distinctive and helpful roles, particularly for the leadership of English, mathematics and SEND provision. Focusing the deputy headteacher role on overall curriculum development is allowing for this work to move ahead with purpose, within clear and timely plans. New leaders are becoming increasingly confident in their areas of responsibility. They are increasingly active in supporting and challenging staff to deliver the improvements now being promoted.

You have been promoting consistent ways of teaching English and mathematics. As a result, pupils' learning in these subjects is becoming more systematic, although a mixed picture of success continues to show in their workbooks. It was pleasing to see that some pupils themselves were able to identify the learning they had achieved in these subjects since September. Disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND are beginning to benefit from their greater inclusion in the learning of their

class group. This is boosting their morale and confidence and helping them stay on track with your expected learning for their ages.

You are ensuring that assessment is used carefully to identify gaps in pupils' early reading skills, and particularly phonics. The separate teaching you are now providing for these pupils reflects a degree of urgency in resolving these weaknesses.

You have clear plans set out and underway for the development of the wider curriculum, using the national curriculum as the benchmark. While much has been achieved in geography so far, a great deal remains to be achieved in other subjects. It is helpful that a feature of this curriculum work is considering how the needs of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND can be met mostly within class lessons, rather than through separate interventions.

Recent improvements to the way records of behaviour incidents are made and reviewed are proving helpful. You are now able to consider why events have occurred and make suitable adjustments to help pupils and staff in the future. This is proving particularly helpful where, for example, a pupil's anxiety or SEND is a relevant factor. You are now aware of the need to consider whether, in some cases, a pupil's anxiety may reflect a social, emotional or mental health need, requiring recognition as a special educational need. However, this specific aspect of the school's provision is not yet well developed. You recognise links for some pupils between such needs and poor attendance. However, the school's record-keeping around pupils' attendance does not allow for the kind of helpful analysis and planning being undertaken for pupils' behaviour. An analysis of leaders' current behaviour records indicates that persistent absence remains an issue to be resolved.

Improvements are evident. Nevertheless, leaders, including governors, recognise that the pace of change needs to increase. At times, leaders' emphasis on developing the benefits of the federation may have reduced their focus on the specific needs of the junior school.

External support

Leaders and staff are benefiting significantly from wide-ranging external support, largely brokered by the local authority.

Peer support and expert advice are being made available to English and mathematics leaders through the relevant local professional hubs. The resources of the local teaching alliance are providing helpful coaching for teachers and senior leaders. Colleagues from local and neighbouring alternative provision are providing staff training in the management of pupils' behaviour, and expert advice and support for individual cases. Leaders are referring readily to the education welfare service for help with pupils' attendance issues.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Wokingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Siân Thornton

Her Majesty's Inspector