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Dear Mrs Nisar

Additional monitoring inspection of Foxdell Junior School

Following my inspection with Michelle Winter, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 16 and 17 March 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the 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 provide education to all pupils during the current circumstances.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 (2) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended) and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for visiting schools while routine inspections remain temporarily suspended. It was additional to the usual monitoring process for schools that are judged to require improvement.

The inspection took place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspection(s). The school was last inspected in December 2019.

Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, this monitoring inspection was initially carried out remotely but moved to an on-site visit due to significant concerns about safeguarding.

We do not give graded judgements on these inspections. Under normal circumstances, if we find some evidence that overall standards may be declining, but no serious concerns have been identified, then the next inspection of the school is likely to be a section 5 inspection and be brought forward. If we identify significant concerns, normally we will deem the inspection as being completed under section 5 of the Act.

During the inspection of your school, serious concerns were identified. These related to the school's safeguarding procedures. However, due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic and the suspension of routine inspections, we have not treated this inspection as a section 5 inspection.

The school will be prioritised for a further inspection as soon as possible.

Having considered all the evidence and taking into account the impact of COVID-19 on the school, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances.

Safeguarding is not effective.

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- ensure that, as a matter of urgency, all staff are appropriately trained and supported to protect children from harm
- ensure all of the safeguarding procedures and systems in place are clear, fully understood by all staff and provide accurate information for leaders and governors to ensure a strong culture of safeguarding across the school
- use assessment activities that will give leaders the detail they need to address the gaps in pupils' knowledge and to adapt the curriculum where necessary.

Context

- Since the previous inspection in December 2019, a new assistant headteacher and special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) have been appointed. In the absence of the executive headteacher, you have led the school since November 2020.
- Across the spring term 2021, approximately 90% of pupils had to work from home. At the same time, around 10% of vulnerable pupils and 50% of pupils with education, health and care plans were learning at school.
- At the time of this inspection, the majority of pupils had returned to school. One class 'bubble' of Year 6 pupils and their teacher were working from home.
- A small number of staff were absent or working from home.

Main findings

- Leaders do not have clear policies or consistent procedures in place for reporting safeguarding concerns. There are different procedures for different groups of staff. This means that important information about pupils' welfare is not passed on to the correct people in the way it should. This, and other weaknesses, undermine leaders' ability to establish a secure safeguarding culture.
- Leaders complete appropriate background checks on staff. They do not, however, have clear oversight of the safeguarding training that staff have completed. Some staff have not had the appropriate training to identify signs that pupils may be at risk of harm, including from dangers in the local area. Others are not clear about how they would respond to pupils who might share their concerns. For too many members of staff, training has lapsed.
- The school's records of bullying incidents are not reliable because some staff do not correctly identify when bullying happens. This hampers leaders' ability to spot trends or make improvements.
- During the autumn term 2020, leaders reviewed the school's curriculum. They found that there were inconsistencies in how subjects were taught across different year groups. Some teachers did not have high enough expectations of what pupils could do. From January 2021, leaders put appropriate plans in place to regularly monitor the curriculum.
- Leaders asked teachers to check where pupils found learning difficult. Leaders used this information to make appropriate changes to the mathematics, English and reading curriculum. Learning activities in mathematics, for example, were adapted to help Year 3 pupils improve their knowledge of 'money'. Where pupils struggled to access resources, staff provided work packs and other resources.
- There is a growing consistency in how leaders review and improve the curriculum. Leaders' work is beginning to have an impact. For those isolating at home, for example, the remote education matches the improving curriculum in school. Leaders recognise they still have work to do to refine the curriculum and to ensure consistency in its implementation.
- Leaders continue to improve the reading curriculum. Pupils have access to a wide range of texts through an e-book system. Staff effectively support pupils who struggle to read. The weakest readers, for example, have access to phonics support and appropriate books to help them improve their reading.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported in school. Staff appropriately use what they know about individual pupils' needs to provide appropriate additional activities to help them learn. Pupils with SEND told inspectors that adults help them when they are stuck.

- When pupils were learning from home, teachers collected useful information about what pupils had learned. Since pupils returned to school, leaders have planned a series of formal checks and tests for pupils. These tests will not provide the detail that leaders need to understand what pupils have missed or forgotten, and what changes may be needed to the curriculum to close gaps in their learning.
- Governors understand the school's context. Through the curriculum committee, they ask appropriate questions to both senior and subject leaders. They are supportive of leaders and check the improvements that are being made.
- The local authority supports the school by providing additional leadership capacity. Leaders work closely with a headteacher of a local primary school to support them to tackle the school's priorities, including the drive to improve the curriculum.

Evidence

This inspection was initially conducted remotely but moved to an on-site visit due to concerns about safeguarding. Inspectors held meetings with the acting headteacher, other senior leaders, the SENCo, pupils, staff, representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to safeguard pupils and provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

Inspectors also reviewed minutes of governing body meetings, scrutinised safeguarding records and policies, viewed attendance, behaviour and bullying logs and checked staff training records.

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

Yours sincerely

Damian Loneragan
Her Majesty's Inspector