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Rachel Ray
Acting Headteacher
Weaverthorpe Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Weaverthorpe
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North Yorkshire
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Dear Mrs Ray

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Weaverthorpe Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit with Tracey Ralph, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 8-9 June 2021, 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 January 2020. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the 2020-21 COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective actions towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The local authority's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The school's action plan 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 York, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Tim Scargill-Knight
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 8 June 2021 to 9 June 2021

Context

The headteacher and key stage 2 teacher left the school in the summer term 2020. An acting headteacher took over the leadership of the school in September 2020. A new teacher for key stage 2 joined at the same time. The previous governing body was dissolved and replaced with an interim executive board (IEB) in September 2020. An assistant headteacher post has been created to strengthen curriculum leadership. The assistant headteacher joined the school in June 2021.

The acting headteacher and IEB took immediate action to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Some aspects of school improvement have been delayed because of the impact of COVID-19. For example, support from a local school and an English hub was postponed because of national restrictions.

Leaders have worked with the local authority and diocese to explore academy conversion. A suitable sponsor had not been found at the time of the inspection. This process has taken up a large amount of the headteacher's time.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Leaders, the IEB and staff are wholly committed to the school. They are determined to see it improve and are taking the actions necessary to do so. Parents recognise the improvements that are being made. One parent commented, 'Since September 2020, my children enjoy learning all the new things the school is offering'.

Leaders, with the support of the diocese, have re-defined the school's vision and values. This has united leaders, staff, pupils and parents behind a shared ethos of care and high ambition. This is improving pupils' well-being, attitudes to learning and confidence.

Leaders rightly prioritised improving the safeguarding culture in the school. Safeguarding is now effective. The IEB methodically checks that the school's policies and procedures for safeguarding are well implemented. Leaders make sure that staff understand the potential risks to pupils' safety. Staff receive regular training and weekly safeguarding updates. They speak confidently about the signs that may indicate a pupil may be at risk of harm. Staff immediately report any concerns to the school's designated safeguarding lead (DSL). Safeguarding matters are appropriately followed up, involving external agencies where necessary. The DSL keeps thorough records. Leaders carry out the necessary checks on adults who work in the school.

Leaders have started to improve the quality of education. Teachers now check what pupils already know in reading, writing and mathematics. They use this information

to plan their teaching. Curriculum plans for reading and mathematics are well sequenced. They make it clear what knowledge pupils should learn. However, plans for other areas of the curriculum are not well sequenced. This means pupils' learning does not build on what they already know. The IEB has appointed a new assistant headteacher to ensure that leaders have the time they need to develop the curriculum effectively.

Staff have had training to improve the teaching of early reading. Leaders have purchased new resources so that pupils read books that match the sounds they already know. However, this has had limited impact. Some pupils are not keeping up with the pace of the school's chosen programme for the teaching of early reading. Teachers do not give pupils enough time to practise the new sounds they are learning. This means that some pupils struggle to remember them. Pupils who need help to keep up with the pace of the school's phonics programme do not receive it regularly enough. This means that too many pupils are further behind with learning to read than they should be. Leaders had planned to work with an English hub from January 2021 to improve the teaching of early reading. However, this work was postponed because of national restrictions linked to COVID-19. Work with the English hub is expected to begin in June 2021.

Leaders have made some progress in helping to develop pupils' wider talents and interest. An after-school multi-sport club has been recently introduced. Leaders have plans to introduce more clubs now that restrictions have lifted.

Leaders have developed detailed curriculum plans for the early years. These are now well sequenced and show how children's knowledge should build over time. The implementation of these plans is variable. Some staff do not use resources well enough to support children's learning. Opportunities to help children practise and remember new learning are missed.

The local authority has established an IEB with appropriate experience and expertise. They provide support and robust challenge for school leaders. The IEB made sure that leaders improved the culture of safeguarding urgently. It is now focused on securing improvements to the school's curriculum, including the teaching of early reading.

Leaders are considerate of staff workload. As a result, staff feel well supported. Staff are proud to work in the school and can see that it is improving. They say that leaders, including members of the IEB, are diligent in their duty of care to staff.

The local authority has failed to comply with its legal duty to provide a statement of action following the last inspection. The local authority provided a draft statement of action to inspectors during the visit. However, this was too late for inspectors to fully assess the effectiveness of the statement. It is, therefore, judged to be not fit for purpose.

Additional support

The local authority brokered the support of the acting headteacher, which has provided stability and a strategic approach to school improvement. Local authority advisers have provided early reading training for staff. They have also helped to develop the curriculum in the early years. The local authority has evaluated the culture of safeguarding and reported its findings to the IEB.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, assistant headteacher and staff. We spoke with representatives of the IEB, the local authority and the Diocese of York. We evaluated records related to safeguarding and the school's single central register. We visited a range of lessons, looked at pupils' work, spoke to pupils and saw pupils reading with a familiar member of staff. We also spoke to several parents on the playground and looked at 16 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. We also considered seven responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.