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18 June 2021

Mr James Baguley
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Dear Mr Baguley

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of The Weald CofE Primary School

Following my visit with Elizabeth Jeanes and Joanna Toulson, Ofsted Inspectors (OI), to your school on 25-26 May 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the 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 school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection that took place in October 2018. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

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

Having considered 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.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the Good Shepherd multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Guildford, the regional schools commissioner and the director of

children's services for Surrey. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Cox
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 25 May 2021 to 26 May 2021

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection in May 2019, there have been four different headteachers. The current headteacher joined the school in September 2020. An assistant headteacher from another trust school was seconded to the school in January 2021. A local governing committee replaced the interim academy board in December 2020. The number of pupils on roll has declined. There are now no pupils in Reception and only one class in key stage 1.

Leaders have made some changes to the curriculum following the period when most pupils were learning at home. For example, they have adjusted the school's phonics programme. Leaders and teachers are also giving even greater priority to pupils' writing. This is because leaders believe pupils' achievement in writing was affected more than in other subjects.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Since the previous monitoring inspection in May 2019, there have been frequent changes of leadership. During this time, the school's journey of improvement stalled.

The current headteacher has brought much needed stability to the school. He has gained the support, trust and confidence of the school community. Parents speak warmly of the changes the headteacher has already made to the school. Roles and responsibilities are now much clearer and there is a strong sense of teamwork. This has enabled improvements to resume in earnest. Leaders have now established a firm foundation on which to build future improvement.

With the support of other leaders, the headteacher has focused his energy on improving teaching and tackling underperformance. Leaders have established 'The Weald Way' set of principles for all teachers to follow. This guidance and leaders' coaching are improving teaching. So far, most training has not been aligned to the school's curriculum. This risks weakening leaders' efforts to further improve teaching. Subject leaders have only recently received training to help them understand and fulfil their roles.

Leaders have prioritised improving writing. They have put in place a new curriculum and teaching strategy. This is providing a coherent, consistent structure for teachers to plan from. In this subject, staff have received training to improve their subject knowledge. In the short time the new writing curriculum has been in place, there are early signs of improvement. Pupils are now learning the right things in the right

order. The quality of pupils' writing is improving. Pupils are beginning to use a wider range of vocabulary and punctuation.

Leaders have successfully raised the profile of reading. They have introduced a host of activities to promote reading for pleasure. Leaders have ensured that reading books now align more closely with pupils' reading skills. However, the quality of phonics teaching is too variable. Some staff have insecure subject knowledge. Leaders have not made sure that all staff have received appropriate training in early reading. The school's phonics programme does not currently set out term by term what pupils should know.

The school's work to develop a curriculum for pupils' personal, social and health education has been successful. Leaders have planned a clear and coherent curriculum that builds year on year. This approach will stand them in good stead in their work to strengthen other subjects. Wisely, leaders are now turning their attention to other curriculum areas. They know that curriculum plans in each subject need to identify precisely what the school wants pupils to learn. However, the school improvement plan is not yet focused sharply enough on achieving this or how leaders intend to strengthen the curriculum.

This is a school that welcomes all pupils. Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is well planned. Leaders have aligned this to the targets on pupils' education, health and care plans. Staff cater well for these pupils' personal development and well-being. Teachers adapt writing tasks appropriately to meet pupils' needs. However, in some subjects such as mathematics teachers do not adapt the curriculum as well for pupils with SEND.

Leaders have taken effective action to improve behaviour, which had declined in recent years. They have established higher expectations and improved lunch time arrangements. As a result, incidents of poor behaviour and exclusions have reduced significantly. The school is an orderly environment for learning. Most pupils behave well and are attentive in class. Nonetheless, there are some inconsistencies in how pupils behave and focus in lessons. This reflects variability in the quality of teaching. Some older pupils feel that staff do not fully resolve playground incidents and occasional unkind behaviour.

Work to improve attendance has been a great success. Leaders have high expectations of pupils' attendance. They have formed strong relationships with families. Leaders have worked tirelessly to support them. This has been pivotal to the success of leaders' work. Attendance rates have improved significantly, particularly for some vulnerable groups of pupils. Persistent absence has also declined markedly.

Leaders have been very mindful not to overload staff with too many new developments all at once. They are ensuring that they embed and sustain recent

improvements. Staff appreciate the stability new leaders have brought to the school. They feel valued and supported and know that leaders appreciate their hard work.

Trustees receive a raft of information to help them understand the school's performance. There are clear systems in place to help them hold leaders to account. Nevertheless, trustees have a limited understanding of how well the curriculum is being planned and implemented.

Additional support

Trust leaders have taken action to strengthen leadership capacity at the school. They have seconded an assistant headteacher from another trust school. This has enabled school leaders with improving the curriculum and building on improvements already made to teaching.

Leaders and staff benefit from and make good use of the training and support from the trust's local hub schools. Staff have received support from the hub to equip them with the knowledge they need to put into practice the school's new writing curriculum.

Evidence

Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, members of staff, three members of the local governing committee, a trustee, the chief executive officer and the trust's director of education to discuss leaders' actions.

Inspectors visited lessons, looked at pupils' work in books, heard pupils read and reviewed the school's curriculum plans. Inspectors talked with pupils during visits to lessons and held two separate meetings with them. They also talked to pupils during other times of the day, such as breaktimes.

Inspectors reviewed a wide range of school documents, including the school's plans for improvement. They took into account the 71 responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and parents' written responses. An inspector also spoke with parents at the start of the second day of the inspection. Inspectors considered the views of staff during meetings with them and took into account the 22 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.