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Liz Brook
Interim Headteacher
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Dear Miss Brook

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Alanbrooke School

Following my visit with Lee Elliott, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 26 and 27 May 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 COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. We discussed the impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in our evaluation.

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

Leaders and managers are not taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board, 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

Zoe Lightfoot
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 26 and 27 May 2021

Context

The impact of COVID-19 has reduced the speed and extent of school improvement since the previous inspection in January 2020. The school was closed to almost all pupils from March 2020 until June 2020. Most pupils did not return to school until September 2020. In addition, face-to-face external support from the local authority ceased during this period of time. As a result, planned work to improve the quality of teaching did not take place.

There have been significant changes to staffing. The substantive headteacher resigned in March 2021 and an interim headteacher has been leading the school since this time. Two teachers left the school during the autumn term and one new teacher was appointed in the spring term. A further teacher left the school in May 2021. Four new governors have joined the interim education board (IEB) since it was appointed in January 2020.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Leaders and the IEB have a clear vision of what needs to happen in this school. However, until there is a stable staffing structure in place, particularly in terms of subject leadership, this school does not have the capacity to put in place the actions needed to secure rapid improvement.

Leaders have discussed and considered the intent of their curriculum. They are in the very early stages of developing subject leaders to be able to plan the curriculum effectively. The current curriculum remains disjointed and is not well sequenced. The pandemic has significantly delayed subject leader development planned for March 2020. This development has recently begun; however, it is too soon to see the impact of this.

Despite Ofsted's review of the statement of action (SOA) in May 2020, school improvement plans still do not consider pupils' personal development sufficiently. The IEB recognises this and recent improvements have begun. School leaders are working closely with family liaison and the wider military community to support teachers in building on pupils' varied starting points. This work needs to continue at pace.

The school is now working with parents and pupils to better understand pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Individual learning plans are now in place. However, these plans fail to fully identify the appropriate strategies and adjustments needed to meet the needs of each pupil. In lessons, pupils do not routinely receive the support they need to be successful in their learning. For

example, during lesson visits, pupils were not fully supported and did not actively participate in the lesson. Teachers say that they feel well supported by the new headteacher but they would welcome more training in working with pupils with SEND and implementing learning plans.

The headteacher has ensured that teachers are trained to teach phonics. Phonics is now taught with fidelity to the school's chosen scheme. A consistent approach to teaching phonics means that most pupils are better able to segment, blend and comprehend the words they are expected to read. This approach is beginning to help the weakest readers in key stage 1 to catch up. From September, leaders intend for this approach to be implemented in key stage 2, with support from the local English Hub.

Staff say that they feel more able to manage pupils' behaviour. The new policy, implemented by the headteacher, is helping pupils to know how to behave in lessons. There are higher expectations for pupils' behaviour. Low-level disruption still remains a problem in some lessons.

The staff survey indicates that staff now feel better supported by leaders. Staff say that they know what they need to do to improve their teaching. Staff are now complying with requests from the headteacher and the IEB.

The work of the IEB has been delayed by the pandemic. The IEB recognises this and understands the urgent need to develop and implement a coherently planned and well-sequenced curriculum that addresses pupils' differing starting points. Historically, the IEB has had to work operationally as well as strategically to support the school. It is now in a stronger position and is able to work strategically now. This is due to the influence of the current headteacher.

Additional support

The local authority brokered external support, including from senior leaders in education. This support was delayed by the pandemic. From September 2020 until March 2021, the school did little to engage with the support offered. Since March 2021, after the arrival of the current headteacher, the support has begun to pick up pace. It is too soon to see the full impact of this support. However, local authority support has not had sufficient impact on the quality of pupils' individual learning plans.

The school is being supported by the Elevate multi-academy trust, both through its role as members of the IEB and as part of an informal headteacher network. In addition, leaders are supported by the army padre. Leaders value this support.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, members of the IEB, staff, pupils and a representative from the local authority. We considered responses to Ofsted's surveys, completed by parents and staff. We visited lessons, examined a sample of pupils' work and observed pupils reading to adults.