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Emma Tuffey
Acting Headteacher
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Leicestershire
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Dear Miss Tuffey

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Fosse Primary School

Following my visit with Janis Warren and Jackie Thornally, Ofsted Inspectors (OIs), to your school on 25 and 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection that took place in November 2019. 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 you 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 not taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Peter Stonier
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 25 and 26 May 2021

Context

COVID-19 has slowed the rate of improvement at the school. Some staff training has been delayed. Approximately three quarters of pupils were educated at home when the school was closed to most pupils at the start of the spring term. A significant number of pupils were not attending school daily, when the school fully reopened.

The headteacher left the school in October 2020, replaced by the current acting headteacher. A new leader for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) joined the school in September 2020. A new, experienced chair and vice-chair of governors took up their roles in the autumn term. Since the previous inspection, five governors have left the governing body and have been replaced. There are still some governor vacancies left to fill.

The school is due to become part of a local multi-academy trust on 1 September 2021.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Leaders have focused their school improvement planning on improving those aspects of the provision that were judged to be weak at the previous inspection. The school's improvement plan, for example, contains clear actions and timescales around phonics, reading and safeguarding, on which leaders have successfully acted. However, in so doing, leaders have not focused sufficiently on ensuring that other aspects of the provision remain of a high-enough quality. Inspectors found significant weaknesses in the planning of the curriculum in the early years and in key stages 1 and 2 as well as in the quality of the personal, social and health education (PSHE) provision. These new-found weaknesses are not all covered in the school's current improvement plan. The plan is therefore not fit for purpose.

There is no overall plan for what children will learn during their time in the early years. There are no curriculum plans at all for children in the nursery. Therefore, leaders and staff do not know what the nursery children will be learning during the academic year. It is not clear how these children will receive the knowledge, skills and key vocabulary they need for their future learning.

Plans for what pupils will learn and when across the different subjects are far from complete. Subject leaders told inspectors that there is still a lot of work to do. In some subjects, such as English and design and technology, leaders have mapped out what they want pupils to learn and when. This is not the case across all subjects, including in geography and art. The learning in these subjects is not

planned or sequenced in enough detail. For example, key vocabulary and concepts are missing. Some leaders have received curriculum training from a school that belongs to the trust the school is due to join shortly. There has not yet been time for this training to be shared with other staff to bring about the necessary improvements to curriculum planning in some subjects.

Leaders have rightly identified that the PSHE curriculum is weak. Pupils are not as well prepared for life in modern Britain as they should be. For example, their knowledge of British values and of faiths and cultures different to their own is poor. Opportunities for pupils to debate and discuss important issues and ideas are limited. There are plans in place for a new PSHE curriculum to be launched in September 2021.

Safeguarding arrangements are now effective. Staff have received appropriate safeguarding training. They know what to do should they have a concern about a pupil or family. Safeguarding records are detailed. They contain relevant information and clear actions for staff to take once a concern has been raised. The single central record and recruitment checks now meet current requirements. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe. There are many adults at the school with whom pupils can share any concerns or worries.

Pupils behave well. They listen and concentrate well in class. Incidents of low-level disruption and bullying are rare. Pupils play well together during social times. Leaders are now analysing incidents to look for patterns or triggers. The number of behaviour incidents has fallen over recent months.

The teaching of phonics has improved. The leader has ensured that all staff use a consistent approach to teach phonics in the early years and through key stage 1. Pupils enjoy these sessions and join in enthusiastically. Pupils receive extra phonics sessions in the afternoons. Pupils who are falling behind are identified quickly. They are given extra help. Staff have received appropriate training. Pupils have reading books at the right level of challenge. Older pupils told inspectors that they enjoy reading and have a good range of books from which to choose.

The new leader for pupils with SEND is ensuring that pupils are receiving effective help. There are appropriate plans in place that meet these pupils' needs. The leader checks that staff follow these plans. Contact with outside agencies and extra funding for pupils who need it have continued.

Leaders have begun to address previous poor attendance, including that of pupils who are regularly absent from school. There are now improved procedures in place to check absences and lateness. Pupils whose attendance improves receive rewards. The family support worker is successful in encouraging many families to ensure that their children attend school every day. Overall, attendance is improving.

Staff whom inspectors spoke with are unanimous in their view that leaders are sensitive to their well-being and workload. They are appreciative of the training opportunities recently offered.

The knowledge and skills of the governing body are improving. Governors are beginning to develop a secure knowledge of the school's strengths and development areas. They have begun to ask challenging questions to leaders, holding them to account for their actions.

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

- ensure that there are precise plans of what knowledge pupils will learn and when across all subjects
- implement the new PSHE curriculum so that pupils have a secure understanding of life in modern Britain, including of faiths and cultures that are different to their own
- design and implement an early years curriculum which meets the needs of all children, providing the necessary strong foundations for their future learning.

Additional support

An executive principal from the multi-academy trust the school is joining in September has been supporting the school frequently during the academic year. The school has used this support to focus on safeguarding, school improvement, finance and a staffing restructure.

A school within the trust has provided some staff with training opportunities.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents, including those relating to safeguarding. Inspectors held meetings with the acting headteacher, senior leaders, the executive principal from the multi-academy trust, four governors, including the chair, a representative from the local authority, pupils, staff and parents. Inspectors considered 23 responses to the staff questionnaire and 28 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, along with 21 free-text responses.