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Nico De Groot
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Dear Mr De Groot

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Woodfield School

Following my visit with Sue Morris-King, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 23 and 24 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 March 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 the school 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 those responsible for governance are 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 governing body, the regional school's commissioner and the director of children's services for Coventry. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Stevens
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 23 June 2021 to 24 June 2021

Context

Since the section 5 inspection in March 2020, the substantive headteacher has left the school. In the headteacher's absence, the school was led by the three senior leaders. An interim headteacher was appointed in February 2021. A local multi-academy trust (MAT) began providing support on a day-to-day basis from February 2021.

An interim executive board (IEB) is due to replace the governing body on 25 June 2021.

The school is split across three sites: Hawthorn Lane, Stoneleigh Road and The Spinney. In the last two weeks, leaders have reorganised the school. Primary-aged pupils continue to attend the Stoneleigh Road site. The Spinney has been designated for use by Year 7 and Year 8 pupils. Currently, Year 7 pupils are attending this site. Years 9 to 11 are now all based at the Hawthorne Road site, whereas previously some of these pupils attended The Spinney.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Since his appointment in February 2021, the interim headteacher has worked at pace to improve various aspects of the school. He has communicated to staff a clear vision and plan for improvement. Staff appreciate this clear sense of direction. The interim headteacher has identified and prioritised the need to create a calm, purposeful and safe learning environment.

The interim headteacher has put a great deal of thought into how he can improve behaviour so that the school is calm and safe. In conjunction with other senior leaders, he has introduced a new behaviour policy. The policy is summed up by 'effort, respect, ambition equals achievement'. This statement is designed to be used by staff and understood by pupils. Although very new, this is already being used well by adults in some classrooms to remind pupils of the school's expectations, for example by rewarding pupils who demonstrate good effort and respectful behaviours. This half term, exclusions on the secondary site have arisen. Leaders intend that exclusions will be used sparingly as a rule. However, leaders are taking a firmer line on unsafe behaviours. The use of physical intervention on the secondary sites has reduced and is minimal. It is used only sparingly in the primary phase, too.

The interim headteacher's actions to reorganise the school over and within the different sites had been in place for less than a week at the time of the monitoring inspection. Nevertheless, the positive impact of these changes was already evident

for the secondary-aged pupils. During the inspection, the atmosphere on all sites was calm. On the Hawthorn Lane site, staff attributed this, at least in part, to pupils being taught in new 'zones'. This approach is minimising pupils' movements around the site and reducing pupils disrupting other pupils' lessons. At The Spinney site, Year 7 pupils were almost all present and were settling in well. They said they liked the new arrangements because there were fewer distractions, which allowed them to focus on their work. The primary site continues to be a calm environment.

Leaders have put a new mentoring system in place. As part of this system, staff have two or three pupils for whom they are responsible. This is intended to help staff to gain an in-depth knowledge of each pupil's needs as well as creating a consistent link between school and home. Staff are already using this system well to challenge and support parents when their children are not attending. Staff also let parents know how well their children are progressing and behaving.

Staff are positive about the recent changes. For example, they can see that the extra focus on behaviour on a day-to-day basis is starting to have a positive impact. They told inspectors that they feel well supported by the interim headteacher and the other senior leaders.

Leaders have taken a range of suitable actions to ensure that safeguarding is at the heart of their work. Safeguarding is the focus of weekly staff meetings. This ensures that staff are kept up to date with current guidance. Safeguarding issues related to individual pupils are also discussed daily by senior leaders. Leaders work closely with other agencies. They challenge these agencies robustly when the help that pupils need is not forthcoming. Leaders ensure that they are present in crucial meetings to discuss the actions necessary to keep children safe. Leaders are well aware of the particular needs of their pupils. They provide training for staff so that they understand how to tailor support to meet pupils' particular needs.

Leaders have analysed patterns in, and issues with, attendance. Many pupils in all year groups attend well, but a significant minority do not. Attendance is higher in the primary phase than in the secondary. Overall attendance for the whole school currently is much lower than the school wants it to be. Leaders are determined that all pupils will be supported and challenged to attend well. They have started to put in place new strategies to make this happen and these are already beginning to have an impact. A new attendance policy sets clear expectations for pupils and their parents. It explains what attendance percentages mean in terms of missed days of school. A helpful chart exemplifying this is on the school's website for parents to see. Staff have begun to send daily texts to parents early in the morning to encourage attendance. Some significant improvements in the attendance of a number of secondary-aged pupils, whose attendance was previously very low indeed, have already been made.

Leaders have conducted an initial review of the school's curriculum. This review shows that, in many subjects, the curriculum is not well matched to the needs of

pupils and does not build knowledge and skills in a logical order. Leaders have started to tackle this by improving the mathematics curriculum. The interim headteacher has ensured that the primary and secondary mathematics leaders have developed this curriculum together. As a result, the curriculum plan builds content from the start of primary to Year 11. Teachers are finding this planning helpful. It is supporting them to make sure that their lessons concentrate on what pupils need to learn next. In addition, leaders have produced guidance for teachers on how to teach mathematical processes such as long multiplication. This guidance is beginning to lead to a more consistent approach to teaching mathematics across the school. Leaders plan to improve the curriculum in other subjects in a similar way by September 2021.

Leaders have taken a range of actions to improve reading. In the primary phase, leaders are building on the strengths that already exist. They are taking carefully considered steps to develop the pupils' love of reading. For example, leaders have introduced a weekly event called 'teatime treats'. As part of this event, pupils' effort in reading is celebrated and rewarded by having tea and biscuits with staff members. In addition, leaders have designated a central area of the Hawthorn Lane site as a school library. This means that secondary-age pupils can now access books more easily. In the secondary phase, leaders now have suitable ways of checking pupils' gaps in reading. At the time of this monitoring inspection, staff were in the process of making these checks. Leaders anticipate that they will show that some secondary-age pupils will be at the early stages of reading and will need extra help to enable them to be able to read fluently. In order to prepare for this, leaders have trained secondary staff in how to teach pupils to read.

Significant progress has been made in ensuring that the alternative provision that the school uses is safe and suitable. The school only uses a small number of alternative providers. The school has identified and only uses those providers that it has decided best meet pupils' needs. Leaders have a good knowledge of each of these providers. They communicate well with providers and expect similar levels of communication in return. Leaders monitor attendance closely. Leaders have carefully considered the courses and qualifications that each provider offers. This year, there are some success stories. Several pupils, for instance, are due to move on to appropriate Level 2 college courses linked to what they have studied at Level 1 at their alternative provider.

Governors were informed at the end of March that an IEB would soon replace them. However, this has not yet been implemented. Consequently, this term there has been a lack of clarity about the governors' status, roles and responsibilities. As a result, their work has been carried out on an ad hoc basis rather than through formal governing body meetings. Nonetheless, governors remain committed to the school and have continued to have conversations with the interim headteacher about the progress that the school is making.

Additional support

School leaders have greatly valued the wide range of support they have received from the local MAT that is currently supporting them. In particular, leaders have received support to develop the mathematics curriculum and to rethink their approach to meeting pupils' special educational needs. MAT leaders have supported the school's special educational needs co-ordinators to secure additional funding for those pupils with the most complex needs. In addition, staff from the MAT are providing day-to-day support at the Hawthorn Lane site.

Following the inspection in March, the local authority (LA) carried out a health and safety audit of the Hawthorn Lane site. As a result, the LA allocated extra funding to help to put right some of the issues identified. Most of the improvements are due to take place during the summer holidays.

Evidence

Inspectors met with the interim headteacher, other senior leaders, staff, the chief executive officer of the MAT currently supporting the school, a group of pupils, the chair of governors and an LA officer.

Inspectors also made brief visits to lessons, spoke informally with pupils, visited an alternative provider, and looked at safeguarding and attendance records and curriculum planning in mathematics. Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including 12 free-text responses, and 36 staff questionnaires.