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Rachel Hayward
Interim headteacher
The Everitt Academy
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Dear Mrs Hayward

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of The Everitt Academy

Following my visit to your school on 27 January 2022, 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 me during the inspection and for the time staff 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 September 2019. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. I discussed the ongoing impact of the pandemic with staff and have taken that into account in my evaluation.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance are not taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

Safeguarding is not effective.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Catch22 Multi Academies Trust Limited, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Liz Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 27 January 2022

Context

Since the first monitoring inspection in June 2021, there has been a significant change in leadership and staffing. The previous headteacher, deputy headteacher, a teacher and several support staff have left the school. The interim headteacher took up her temporary employment at the beginning of January 2022. A middle leader has stepped into the role of assistant headteacher. There are several temporary appointments, including that of special educational needs coordinator.

Trust leaders from Catch22 are in consultation with another specialist multi-academy trust with a view to transferring the operation of the school later this year.

During the inspection, the inspector focused on safeguarding arrangements and leaders' actions to support pupils' behaviour and attendance at school. Year 9 pupils were not in school due to staff absence related to COVID-19. The inspector spoke to the interim headteacher via a videoconference call at the start of the day.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

There has been little progress with addressing the issues raised by the previous section 5 inspection and the first monitoring inspection. Leaders have not made sure that pupils are safe, feel safe and want to attend school. High staff turnover and the impact of self-isolation during the pandemic is making it difficult for leaders to make and sustain improvement. In her own words, the interim headteacher stated, 'The shifting sand with absence is making life hard.' Initiatives stop, only to restart again. This results in little change.

Leaders now have a timetable of lessons for pupils in each year group. They have altered the deployment of staff. Pupils now receive specialist teaching rather than being taught all subjects by one teacher. However, too few pupils attend school to experience these changes. Attendance is unacceptably low. Over three quarters of the school population are persistently absent. While leaders have mapped out what pupils are doing, such as attending an alternative provider or completing online learning, too often leaders expect pupils to be at home. Leaders' expectations of pupils attending school are not high enough. This continues to limit their life chances.

With constant change and few familiar faces, pupils are experiencing heightened anxiety and stress. Due to this, when pupils are on site, this often continues to manifest itself in poor behaviour. The number of behaviour incidents increased in the second half of the autumn term and suspensions, although reducing, are still high. Recently, leaders have involved external agencies to help control behaviour due to the number of incidents of serious violence. Staff continue to experience physical assault.

Inadequacies remain with the processes and procedures for safeguarding. Staff are still holding records of communication from parents and multi-agencies in different places. The quality of record-keeping is also inconsistent. These weaknesses make it difficult for staff to have a clear view of how best to support the most vulnerable pupils.

Since the previous visit, there has been a change in personnel. There is a new designated safeguarding lead and other members of the safeguarding team. Leaders have introduced daily discussions which are helping staff to communicate issues as they arise. The safeguarding team is beginning to tackle the backlog of record-keeping. Although overdue, arrangements are now in place to train new staff in safeguarding processes and procedures. These arrangements started this term.

The statutory timelines for reviewing pupils' education, health and care plans have not been met. Trust leaders are focused on ensuring this is completed, as well as integrating systems so that leaders from the new trust have clear information about the school.

Additional support

Trust leaders regularly visit to undertake quality assurance visits, as well as to provide extra support to leaders and staff. The overall safeguarding leader for the trust checks the use of the school's safeguarding system, providing guidance and support for the newly appointed leader of safeguarding.

The trust is decorating the site, purchasing new resources and equipping a specialist building for the bespoke provision for some pupils.

School leaders work with the local authority's education welfare officer to help increase the attendance of some pupils. The local authority has also checked the school's systems and procedures.

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and recording systems for safeguarding, behaviour and attendance. The inspector met with trust leaders, members of the local governing body, the executive headteacher, the interim headteacher, the assistant headteacher, teachers, advocates and support staff. The inspector also spoke with a representative from the local authority and the education welfare officer. She gathered the views of parents through telephone discussions.