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Aymeline Bel
Head of School
Queensmill School
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Dear Ms Bel

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Queensmill School

Following my visit to your school on 16 June 2022, 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 November 2021. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

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

The school continues to be inadequate. Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Hammersmith & Fulham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Wright
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 16 June 2022

Context

Since the last inspection there has been a large number of new appointments especially of support staff. The head of school has now been in post since September 2021, which pre-dates the last inspection. There are currently two vacancies on the governing body.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Leaders and governors have been prompt and well-organised in tackling the weaknesses in safeguarding identified in the last inspection. According to one trustee, inspectors' findings were a 'salutary shock' to the trust board. Leaders and governors have placed a priority on making sure the most important things are tackled in the right order. As a result, pupils, all of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are better protected from the risk of harm. Staff say they think leaders have become 'more vigilant and present' in checking that what should be done to help keep pupils safe is actually happening.

Leaders' plans for improvement are sharply focused on meeting the challenge of moving out of the serious weaknesses category. Governors meet regularly to consider the school's progress and ask challenging questions of leaders about the impact of actions taken. They offer this challenge with well-measured detachment from the day-to-day management of the school and have resisted the temptation to take on the mantle of the expert. Leaders and governors have a realistic view of how far along the journey they have come. They are using this to stay focused on what still needs to happen, to embed what has already begun and to reduce the risk of weaknesses re-emerging.

Leaders have strengthened oversight of the process for ensuring staff are suitable to work with pupils. They have made sure that gaps in these checks, identified at the last inspection, have been eliminated. Since the inspection a large number of new staff have been recruited. Leaders now insist that checks on their suitability are made and recorded before they are allowed to take up their positions. However, governors' reviews of checks on staff suitability do not pick up every error and omission. Leaders recognise that further training on safer recruitment, including for governors, needs to be urgently completed.

Leaders have made sure staff record concerns about pupils' behaviour in detail. They spend time with staff to decide how the support pupils receive afterwards might be improved. The link between incident records and plans to support pupils' behaviour have been strengthened. These plans also include information relevant to keeping pupils safe. Leaders recognise that the next step is to make more rigorous checks on the quality and consistency of what is recorded on these records.

Leaders record when any sexualised or discriminatory behaviour occurs. They use this to inform plans to support and improve the behaviour of individuals. However, leaders do not

look at or analyse records of pupil behaviour in enough detail to pick up patterns in sexualised behaviour and abuse or bullying and other discriminatory behaviour. They intend to introduce a single electronic system to record safeguarding and all other concerns in order to help them notice these trends more easily. This is particularly important as leaders, staff and governors all agree that sexual safety is a particularly predominant risk factor for pupils attending this school, given their specific special educational needs.

Most staff, including new staff, are clear about current statutory safeguarding guidance and know how to raise a concern. The content of safeguarding training is focused on helping staff identify concerns and worries about pupils, most of whom have little or no ability to talk about how they are feeling. Nearly all staff have been trained in the method chosen by the school to de-escalate and if necessary, physically restrain pupils. However, some newer staff have yet to receive this training.

Leaders have taken effective action to sort out weaknesses in the management of pupils' medication. Training to help staff understand how to manage medications has been well understood by new and established staff. Leaders have made sure medication is routinely safely stored and available if a pupil needs it. They also systematically check that agreed procedures for managing pupils' medication are followed. This enables them to put right any errors in storing or managing medicines promptly and get in touch with parents or carers in time if medication is about to run out or expire.

Staff say there have been improvements in how well they feel supported in terms of their development, workload and well-being. Being given time to reflect with senior leaders on the management of pupils' behaviour has been particularly valued. New staff feel the programme of training and information sharing on their arrival is helping them understand the school's safeguarding and behaviour policies even if they have not worked in a specialist school before.

Additional support

Leaders and governors have recognised the need to seek an external view of their safeguarding practice. Audits by the local authority and an independent consultant have been helpful in sharpening leaders' thinking and fine-tuning actions as their plans for improvement have progressed. For example, the challenge provided by an external review of safeguarding has helped leaders realise that staff need to be more familiar with the recommendations in the recent Ofsted review into sexual abuse between children and young people.

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work. He scrutinised documents related to safeguarding, the management of support for pupils' behaviour, the checks on the recruitment of staff and leaders' plans for school improvement. He met with the executive headteacher, the head of school, members of the senior leadership team, members of the

governing body and the board of trustees. He had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. He spoke with a group of pupils, visited some lessons and met with two groups of school staff.