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Interim Headteacher
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Dear Miss Donovan

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Lydeard St Lawrence Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 19 July 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 that school leaders gave during the inspection and for the time they 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 leaders 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 improvement plan is 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 Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Marie Thomas
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 19 July 2022

Context

Staff and pupil attendance was affected by COVID-19. However, this did not stop leaders concentrating on the essential improvements that needed to be made to the school. Despite national restrictions, monitoring continued when safe to do so. Since the previous inspection, a significant number of staffing changes have taken place. A new leadership and teaching team was introduced from January 2022. Two new governors have also been appointed. The current interim headteacher was appointed in January 2022. The special educational needs coordinator began her role in February 2022. The number of pupils on roll has fallen.

During the visit, the lead inspector focused on evaluating the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements.

Governors have followed the directive academy order. There are plans to join a multi-academy trust from September 2022.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Since January 2022, external agencies have been working alongside leaders to monitor the progress of school improvement and agree next steps. This is a significant shift from the autumn term 2021, when external agencies were responsible for driving school improvement.

Leaders have crafted an improvement plan that ensures that the school community concentrates on the right areas for development. The plan sets out clearly in small, achievable steps what must be done to bring about the necessary changes. Leaders understand there is still much to do to get the school, including the quality of education, to where it needs to be. However, they are taking the right steps to build staff confidence and knowledge effectively to secure the required improvements.

Leaders, including governors, have rightly prioritised safeguarding. They have worked with focused determination to respond to the issues identified at the previous inspection. There are agreed and robust systems and processes in place to ensure that pupils are safeguarded. Staff and governors complete appropriate training that helps them understand and carry out their safeguarding roles and responsibilities effectively. This includes the two members of staff named as designated safeguarding leads. Leaders ensure that appropriate recruitment safeguarding checks are completed before staff and volunteers begin working at the school. These records are monitored by a suitably trained governor. All new staff complete a thorough induction process.

The safeguarding recording and reporting system is used by staff correctly. Leaders respond quickly to the concerns raised. Improved identification of individual pupils' needs and clear communication among staff mean appropriate support is increasingly put in place for pupils swiftly. Leaders recognise they now need to keep detailed records of the support and outcomes for the pupil to help them evaluate the impact of their work accurately.

Staff receive appropriate training to implement the new behaviour policy and procedures consistently. They are supported and equipped with the correct skills and knowledge to manage pupils' behaviour effectively. Staff have raised their expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. The school environment is calm and orderly. Staff know the pupils well. For example, new play equipment was introduced during breaktimes as some pupils struggled to play with others. Staff now help pupils enjoy playing with their friends in a structured and supportive way. Pupils say that they appreciate the range of activities available to them during breaktimes. Pupils say that they feel safe.

Leaders have started to make improvements to the school's curriculum. For example, the validated phonics scheme is now embedded across Key Stage 1. This is having a positive impact on pupils' reading. Pupils enjoy reading and selecting books from the library. However, the new reading scheme is not in place. Leaders acknowledge that the school's curriculum intent is in its infancy.

Pupils' learning is currently supported by a high level of adult help and intervention. Leaders understand that as pupils' attitudes to learning improve and strengths and gaps in knowledge are identified accurately, pupils will need to develop greater resilience and independence.

Leaders support staff well. The safeguarding and behaviour management systems and appropriate staff training enable them to do their job successfully. Staff, leaders and governors work together for the benefit of the pupils.

Additional support

Following the school's inspection in November 2021, governors and the interim headteacher have worked closely with the local authority, two local multi-academy trusts, the local mathematics network and headteachers from neighbouring schools. This has led to the appointment of staff and other support, including relevant training and professional development, that have contributed to stabilising the school.

Evidence

As part of the focus on safeguarding, the inspector reviewed the school's safeguarding policy, and scrutinised the single central record and examples of how the electronic system is used to report, record and escalate staff concerns. The inspector met with the deputy designated safeguarding lead and spoke with pupils, staff and governors about safeguarding. The inspector also reviewed local authority visit notes and audit

information, and scrutinised governors' plans, evidence of monitoring visits and minutes of meetings.

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with a local authority officer and representatives of the governing body, including the chair. The inspector also met with a range of staff throughout the school day, including at breaktimes and through some visits to lessons.