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Roberta Kelly
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Kelly

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of The CE Academy

Following my visit with Matthew Fearn-Davies, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Elizabeth Moore, Ofsted Inspector, 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 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 May 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. We discussed the ongoing 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:

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 not 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 West Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Tordoff
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 19 July 2022

Context

The number of pupils on the school's roll has fallen significantly since the previous inspection. Very few pupils attended school on site at the time of this inspection.

A number of staff have left the school since the previous inspection. Some of these have not been replaced. Leaders have reorganised staff to make sure that there are enough at each site to deliver the planned curriculum.

At the time of the previous inspection, the school was accommodated over eight sites. One of these sites is no longer used. Another site only provides vocational courses, as well as offering a nursery provision for the children of young mothers who attend the school.

A new multi-agency coordinator was appointed in January 2022. This coordinator is responsible for the day-to-day safeguarding arrangements, under the guidance of the designated safeguarding lead.

The headteacher is due to retire at the end of the current academic year. The deputy headteacher has been appointed to take up this role in September 2022. The two assistant headteachers will assume the positions of deputy headteachers at the same time.

The regional schools commissioner has approved the transfer of the school to a multi-academy trust. This move is planned to take place on 1 September 2022.

The monitoring inspection focused specifically on safeguarding arrangements, attendance procedures and governors' oversight of leaders' work.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Leaders have successfully improved some aspects of the provision that were judged to be weak at the time of the previous inspection. They have made sure that systems to track and monitor pupils' attendance are secure. A senior leader at each site oversees attendance. They check that staff follow attendance procedures consistently. Secretaries record pupils' attendance accurately each session. They log pupils' attendance and absences using the correct codes. If pupils do not arrive by the expected time, staff contact parents and carers promptly to find out why. Staff carry out home visits to check on pupils' welfare, if necessary.

Leaders have introduced a new electronic system to record pupils' attendance. They use this system to spot any concerns about pupils' attendance or any issues in the way that staff have recorded this. Leaders only authorise absences that are acceptable. They take

appropriate action when pupils' attendance is too low. Governors review attendance information provided by leaders.

Many pupils receive part of their education through alternative providers. Leaders identify courses that are well suited to pupils' needs and interests. They carry out appropriate checks before pupils start to attend these provisions. Leaders seek guidance from external advisers if the activities involved are of a specialist nature. Leaders share relevant information with the off-site provisions about pupils who attend there. School staff accompany some pupils to these providers. For other pupils, staff follow well-established routines to confirm pupils' attendance and check on pupils' welfare. Providers know to contact leaders quickly when safeguarding issues arise.

At the time of the previous inspection, inspectors raised concerns about pupils' individual risk assessments. This is still the case. Leaders identify the precise risks that affect each pupil. However, the identified steps to mitigate these risks are not specific enough. Leaders do not take into account each pupil's particular circumstances. They do not make effective use of information provided when pupils join the school to inform pupils' risk assessments. Some of these risk assessments are not reviewed often enough. These risk assessments do not give staff the guidance they need to be able to support pupils as well as they could. Leaders complete risk assessments for trips and visits. The evaluation of risks of some of these activities are too general.

The school's culture of safeguarding has improved since the previous inspection. Leaders have responded to advice from external safeguarding audits to strengthen practices and procedures. They carry out required recruitment checks before an adult starts working at the school. Leaders and staff receive relevant safeguarding training. Staff know about the issues that may put pupils at risk of potential harm. Daily debriefs on each site give staff the chance to share any changes in a pupil's circumstances. Staff report concerns promptly to leaders. Leaders seek timely support from external agencies when pupils need extra help. Records of concerns and leaders' actions are detailed. Relationships between pupils and staff are strong. Pupils learn about issues that may affect them, such as online safety, consent and healthy relationships. They trust staff to provide them with the help and support they need.

Governors are mindful of the workload of leaders and staff. They often check on the well-being of senior leaders. Leaders update governors regularly about their work to improve the school. However, governors do not challenge leaders rigorously enough. They focus closely on the financial position of the school. They do not pay close enough attention to other areas of the school's provision, including safeguarding. Governors do not check sufficiently well that leaders complete the planned improvements. They have not ensured that the school's action plan is fit for purpose.

Additional support

Following the previous inspection, governors arranged for the local authority and a local multi-academy trust to carry out separate reviews of safeguarding. These reviews have helped leaders to strengthen the school's safeguarding arrangements.

The school is due to join a new multi-academy trust in September 2022. School and trust leaders have started to work together to ensure that there is a smooth transition.

Evidence

Inspectors visited five of the school's seven sites.

Inspectors observed the school's work and reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school's action plan and other plans for improvement. They considered documents relating to safeguarding, including reviews of safeguarding arrangements carried out by external organisations, and the single central record. Inspectors reviewed information relating to pupils' attendance, risk assessments and the school's use of alternative provision.

Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, including safeguarding leaders and the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator. Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the chair of the local governing body. Inspectors spoke on the telephone to representatives of five of the 11 alternative providers used by the school.