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Grant Hopkins
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Dear Mr Hopkins

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Whitehouse Primary School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 9 November 2023, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in July 2022.

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's overall effectiveness, but to identify and report on the school's progress. It is to highlight to the school and parents any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other senior leaders, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the multi-academy trust that is currently supporting the school, the chair of the interim executive board (IEB) and IEB governors the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also reviewed the school's single central record, scrutinised behaviour logs, visited lessons, met with pupils and staff, met with the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), and the care guidance and support lead. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to be no longer judged as having serious weaknesses.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Since the previous inspection in July 2022, there have been changes in school leadership, including governance. You joined the school in September 2023 as interim headteacher. A

new assistant headteacher was also appointed in September 2023. The governing body was replaced with an IEB in June 2023. The IEB is made up of representatives from the local authority (LA) and the local multi-academy trust (MAT) that is supporting the school, including the CEO. The IEB is providing robust accountability and strategic leadership for the school. The previous acting headteacher made changes to improve pupils' behaviour. You have continued this work. For this inspection, I focused mainly on pupils' behaviour and attitudes because this was the aspect of the school that was judged to be inadequate in July 2022. However, I also gathered evidence about the quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), the programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE), and leadership and management.

Following the previous inspection, an acting headteacher was placed in post for a short period of time, as part of the school support brokered with a local MAT. This acting headteacher identified that the poor behaviour of pupils had to be addressed as a priority. A new 'relational and behaviour policy' was put in place. This has five clear steps (consequences) for adults to use to respond to inappropriate behaviour. You make sure that this behaviour policy is fairly and consistently applied. Pupils now talk positively about how behaviour in the school has significantly improved. This view is shared by staff. Lessons are calm, enabling pupils to listen and learn. At breaktimes, pupils enjoy playing games together. Staff are available to help pupils when they have a problem. Pupils now feel safe in school. Pupils appreciate the use of reflection time where the care guidance and support lead helps pupils to reflect on their choices.

As part of the support from a local MAT, leaders have implemented a tracker to assess and identify the needs of vulnerable pupils with complex needs. You make sure that the systems for logging behavioural incidents are appropriately used by staff. You use this information in weekly meetings along with key leaders in the school to make sure that the right support is provided for individual pupils. For example, you are ensuring that pupils receive counselling if they need it. While the number of significant behaviour incidents is reducing, there is still work to do to ensure that pupils have positive attitudes towards learning in lessons. Pupils do not disrupt lessons now. However, at times, some pupils are not fully engaged in their learning. The new care guidance and support lead works with pupils and their families to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence.

Together with the LA and the MAT, you have made sure that there is a clear approach to identifying and meeting the needs of pupils with SEND. Pupils with complex needs get the right support. The SENCo works with teachers to ensure that all pupils' needs are correctly identified. The SENCo has worked alongside staff to ensure that all classrooms are equipped to meet a range of needs. This means that classrooms are well organised. They include specific resources, such as ear defenders and quiet work areas, to minimise distractions. This has helped to reduce the number of significant behavioural incidents, because unmet needs are being addressed. Pupils with SEND are generally taught in their classes. Most pupils access the same curriculum as their peers. However, the whole-school curriculum has very recently been implemented. There is more work to be done to ensure that the new curriculum is adapted effectively to meet the needs of all pupils.

You have implemented a new programme for PSHE. It sets out clearly the knowledge that pupils must gain as they move through the school. The themes that emerge from leaders' weekly discussions using the tracker are informing the adaptations to PSHE lessons and assemblies. Pupils are benefiting from meaningful discussions about important topics, such as healthy relationships and how to stay safe when online. You continue to work on this to improve consistency of provision across the whole school.

The significant improvements have been made possible by the continued external support provided by the LA and the support brokered with the local MAT. Improvement planning is detailed and precise. Together you have rightly prioritised improving the behaviour of pupils. Staff appreciate the support they receive from leaders in the MAT. Staff report that they are pleased to see the work that they are doing is having a positive impact on pupils.

The IEB continues to work in partnership with the LA and local MAT to fulfil its statutory responsibilities.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the IEB, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for North Tyneside. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Kathryn McDonald
His Majesty's Inspector