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Deborah Weaver
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Dear Mrs Weaver

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Cantrell Primary and Nursery School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 3 and 4 December 2024, 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 March 2024.

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's key and (where applicable) provision judgements, 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, Catherine Thornton, Ofsted Inspector (OI), Sylvie Newman, OI, and I discussed with you, other senior leaders, staff, governors and the local authority 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. We also visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, met with pupils and scrutinised documents related to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). 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 no longer be judged as having serious weaknesses.

The school should take further action to:

- Ensure that the safeguarding culture is firmly embedded throughout the school.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Since March 2024, there have been several changes in staffing. There is a new English leader and two new teachers. The school has appointed two teaching assistants and two sports coaches. There are new members of the governing body, including a new chair of the board of governors.

While the school and governors share the same determination to improve the culture of safeguarding, the arrangements for safeguarding are not fully effective. The culture of safeguarding is not embedded fully throughout the school. A small minority of staff do not have a strong, shared understanding that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. However, the school has made significant improvements to ensure that all of the necessary recruitment checks are made before staff begin to work with pupils. The school's approach to responding to concerns about pupils' welfare is robust. Pupils have confidence that the school takes their concerns seriously. Governors and leaders have the knowledge and skills necessary to continue this journey of improvement.

The school has made huge strides towards building a more coherent curriculum. Staff are knowledgeable and passionate about the subjects that they lead. The school has ensured that staff have the knowledge, skills and capacity to carry out their roles. While these improvements have started to make a difference, it is too soon to see the full impact on pupils' outcomes. This is because the improvements to the curriculum are still in their infancy.

The school has focused on improving staff morale. Communication systems are clear. Staff views have been listened to. Staff are now proud to work at the school. The staff team is united in its desire to succeed. Staff appreciate the care and consideration given to their workload and well-being. They feel valued and supported in their work.

The school's action plan sets out clear expectations for improving the quality of education. The school has rightly prioritised reading and writing. This started in earnest in September 2024 with the early reading curriculum. The school has a clear rationale for the introduction of a new phonics programme. Staff have been trained well and know how to implement this programme. They have access to a wealth of resources to support them in their teaching. This includes in-class support from a phonics specialist in the school. Although this is in its infancy, the positive impact is beginning to show in pupils' work and in their positive attitudes to reading. Staff are enthusiastic about this new approach. The English curriculum is now well designed. The detailed knowledge that pupils must learn is clearly identified. Work in pupils' books reflects their learning of the intended curriculum. However, this is still very new. Teachers check gaps in pupils' knowledge and use this information to provide extra support for those who need it.

The school has prioritised improving routines to promote a positive learning environment. This work has borne fruit. The school's new behaviour policy has ensured that high behavioural expectations have been set. Staff follow the policy consistently. As a result, classrooms are typically calm so that pupils' learning is not disturbed. Pupils behave sensibly during social times. They enjoy spending time with their friends. The sports coaches provide a wealth of exciting activities. Pupils queue up eagerly to participate in these activities.

Pupils say that bullying is rare. They have confidence that the school will sort out any worries that they may have. Pupils speak with maturity and respect when discussing difference and diversity. They have a clear understanding and knowledge of fundamental British values. Pupils have beautiful manners. They hold doors open for others and greet visitors with a cheery smile.

The school's systems for the identification of pupils with SEND has strengthened. Leaders have a detailed oversight of pupils on the special educational needs register and use this information to inform training for staff. The school accesses external support from specialists to ensure that pupils receive the support they need. As a result of this refined provision, outcomes for pupils with SEND are improving.

The school has embraced the extensive support provided by the local authority, the Nottingham Schools Trust and by external consultants. This support has influenced the many improvements made since the previous inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Kirsty Norbury
His Majesty's Inspector