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David Mackey
Principal
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Dear Mr Mackey

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Sutton Community Academy

Following my visit with Chris Davies, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 5 November 2019, 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 March 2019. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

Leaders and managers are not taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the

director of children's services for Nottinghamshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Tordoff

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in March 2019

- Trust and school leaders must urgently address the weaknesses in safeguarding arrangements by:
 - ensuring that risk assessments for vulnerable pupils are sufficiently detailed and consider all potential risks
 - regularly reviewing risk assessments for vulnerable pupils and amending them when necessary
 - ensuring that all staff understand the processes to follow if they have a concern about an adult’s conduct
 - establishing a clear and secure process for mitigating risk while concerns about an adult’s conduct are investigated
 - ensuring that records are clear and detailed, and contain all the information about referrals, monitoring and support
 - establishing protocols to ensure that all staff are kept appropriately informed about vulnerable pupils to adequately support them and safeguard all pupils
 - ensuring that safer recruitment practices are followed
 - carrying out risk assessments to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that leaders:
 - evaluate the impact of their work thoroughly and take swift action to address weaknesses when they are identified
 - account carefully for the allocation of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding and evaluate its impact, amending plans accordingly
 - respond quickly and effectively to parents’ concerns.
- Reduce the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent from school.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils are able to achieve
 - pupils know how to improve their work.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 5 November 2019

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documents. They considered the trust's statement of action, the school's improvement plan and other plans for improvement. They reviewed documentation relating to safeguarding, the school's system for recruiting staff and the single central register.

Inspectors met with senior leaders, subject leaders and a group of pastoral staff. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead. Inspectors held meetings with representatives of the Academy Transformation Trust, including the chief executive officer and one of the trust's regional education directors.

Inspectors observed learning with senior leaders and looked at examples of pupils' work. They met with two groups of pupils and spoke with pupils around the school.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been changes to the school's leadership. Both vice-principals were appointed permanently in June 2019. A new assistant principal and a new head of sixth form have been appointed. In September 2019, an executive principal took up his position.

The trust has reviewed the responsibilities of senior leaders. They have created three new temporary roles for associate assistant principals. Leaders have trained the heads of year to take on more safeguarding responsibilities.

A new head of corporate affairs oversees governance in the trust. The trust has established a new local academy committee. This includes new governors and an experienced chair.

The progress made by the school in tackling the key areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection

Leaders have developed a new system to identify and manage the risks that pupils may face. They share these risk assessments with the adults who work with each pupil. Leaders do not review and update risk assessments in a timely manner. Some are out of date. Leaders are not confident that staff implement risk assessments effectively.

Leaders have put in place new processes for recording and tracking safeguarding concerns. Records are still not detailed enough. On occasion, leaders do not record all their actions to keep pupils safe. Leaders refer their concerns to outside agencies when pupils need more support, but they do not follow up these referrals quickly enough.

Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities. They receive regular training updates, for example about peer-on-peer abuse and risk assessments. They are aware of the risks that pupils may face in the local community, such as right-wing extremism. Staff know how to report any concerns they have to leaders. They are confident that leaders will respond appropriately.

Staff know that they must tell an appropriate leader about any concerns they have about another adult. Not all staff know that they can refer their concerns to the local authority directly.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe. They know about staying safe online, for example, and illegal substance misuse. They take part in lessons about relationships and sex education. They understand the importance of consent. Pupils feel safe in school. They appreciate the improvements to the toilets to make them safer.

Leaders have tightened up their recruitment processes. School leaders have received safer recruitment training recently. They complete all the checks required before new staff or governors start work at the school. They complete a risk assessment when they need to so that they are confident an adult is suitable to work with children. However, leaders do not ensure that trustees are checked as thoroughly. They have not followed up requests for information quickly enough.

Leaders' work to improve the quality of education is still in its early stages. They have provided staff with training focused on planning a curriculum that is demanding for all pupils. Curriculum leaders are beginning to work more closely with their teams. In many subjects, these teams have reviewed their curriculum plans to make sure that the plans are ambitious and provide pupils with enough challenge. However, this work is in its early stages.

Not all teachers have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils find some of their work too easy. Some teachers do not check pupils' understanding. Their plans do not have a clear enough focus on pupils gaining knowledge or developing their skills over time. They do not change their plans when they need to.

Leaders have introduced a new marking and feedback policy. However, teachers do not apply the policy consistently. Some teachers do not check that pupils know how to improve their work so that they can achieve well.

Leaders have acted to improve pupils' behaviour. They have introduced new systems to help staff be more consistent when pupils do not behave well. There are some signs of improvement. However, some incidents of poor behaviour still take place.

Pupils know what bullying is. They say that on occasion it does happen in school. Pupils know that they can talk with an adult about any concerns they may have. Most pupils say that adults will help to resolve any issues they may have with bullying. Not all pupils are confident that this is the case.

Attendance is just below the national average. Most pupils know the importance of being in school. Leaders' systems to monitor and improve pupils' attendance are not yet effective. There are still too many disadvantaged pupils who are regularly absent from school.

Relationships between pupils and adults are mutually respectful. Pupils understand how adults expect them to behave. They know that if they use inappropriate language, for instance, they will receive a sanction. There is a pleasant atmosphere during social times. However, some lessons are still affected by pupils being disruptive.

The effectiveness of leadership and management at the school

School leaders have been too slow to improve their capacity to respond to safeguarding concerns. The designated leader for safeguarding has many other responsibilities. Until recently, there were too few staff with higher-level safeguarding training. The new chair of governors has carried out an audit of safeguarding recently. He identified areas that need to improve. The trust has appointed a new safeguarding lead. This person has not yet begun working with the school. Trustees believe that safeguarding practices and procedures in school are now robust. They have not checked that this is the case.

Leaders' evaluations of the impact of their work are overgenerous and sometimes inaccurate. They do not think carefully enough about what is and what is not working. Leaders have identified a lot of things they need to improve. However, their plans to bring about these improvements lack clarity. Often, the impact they want to achieve is not clear. Without well-defined success criteria, trustees and governors cannot hold leaders to account for the impact of their actions.

Leaders have improved their plans for the extra funding to support disadvantaged pupils and Year 7 pupils who need help with their English and mathematics. However, these plans are still not sharp enough. Leaders check that the actions are happening, but do not monitor the impact of the actions on pupils' achievements. Trustees and governors do not check closely how leaders use these funds or their impact.

Plans to improve communication with parents are still in their early stages. A new parent group has only met twice since the previous inspection. Leaders have recently implemented new systems to make sure that any concerns raised by parents are responded to within two days.

The new chair of governors is informed about leaders' work. Other new governors are still to receive training about their roles and responsibilities. They have completed a skills audit so that they can take on the most suitable roles. Trust representatives provide leaders with challenge, for example about how well pupils achieve. However, their monitoring does not always focus well enough on the areas that were identified as needing improvement at the previous inspection.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Leaders have identified the areas that need to improve. They have begun to address the weaknesses in safeguarding.
- Leaders' actions have improved pupils' behaviour. Pupils understand how they are expected to behave. Most pupils are respectful of each other and of adults.
- Curriculum leaders have reviewed their subject plans to make sure that their plans are ambitious and demanding for all pupils.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Some leaders have too many responsibilities. This limits their ability to check that the safeguarding arrangements are working or improve them. The trust has been too slow to provide the necessary support.
- Teachers' expectations of what some pupils can do are still too low.
- Teachers do not adapt their plans well enough in response to the gaps in pupils' knowledge. They do not make sure that pupils are gaining the necessary knowledge to help them achieve well.
- Leaders do not ensure that teachers use the new marking and feedback policy consistently. Pupils do not know how to improve their work.
- Pupils still disrupt some lessons. Incidents of poor behaviour still happen.

External support

Leaders have sought some external guidance to help them improve their recruitment processes. They have also received some help to review how well they support disadvantaged pupils.