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Mrs Catherine Logan
Headteacher
Twydall Primary School and Nursery
Twydall Lane
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Kent
ME8 6JS

Dear Mrs Logan

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Twydall Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to your school on 12 March 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 June 2018. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, I met with you, senior leaders and a group of staff. I held meetings with the chair and vice-chair of the local governing body and the chief executive officer and trust improvement lead from Rainham Mark Education Trust (RMET). I also met with a representative from Medway local authority.

Together, you and I visited lessons. We spoke with pupils during these visits. I met with a group of pupils and looked at their written work in books. I met with parents at the start of the school day and considered all responses since the previous inspection on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.

I reviewed the school's single central record of recruitment checks. I scrutinised a wide range of school documentation, including leaders' analysis of pupils'

attendance and progress and I reviewed pupils' behaviour logs. The trust's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

Staffing overall has remained stable since the previous inspection. You were appointed as substantive headteacher in January this year. Two new governors have recently joined the local governing body. You have appointed a new member of nursery staff, a teaching assistant in Reception Year and two midday supervisors.

Funding for hearing-impaired pupils has now ceased, with one pupil remaining in this provision. From January 2019 the school has been providing breakfast and after-school sessions.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

You show determined leadership, underpinned by your passion for an inclusive school and your fundamental belief that '[pupils] have one chance'. You are ably supported by members of your senior leadership team, who share your focused approach and vision for the high standards you expect to see. You work well as a team and together have brought consistency and a sense of urgency to your work. Staff welcome the positive culture in the school and describe it as a 'supportive' and 'progressive' place to be. All staff, including support staff and middle leaders, value the opportunities you are providing for their professional development and recognise its impact on improving their practice.

During my tour of the school and visits to the classrooms, the atmosphere was calm and purposeful. Relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils, are respectful. You and your leaders are skilfully improving the quality of teaching and learning. Pupils were observed appropriately engaged in a range of learning activities, working hard and rising to teachers' increasingly higher expectations of what they can do. The impact of your work to ensure that all staff in lessons contribute to pupils' learning is evident, with adults adeptly helping pupils who need extra support and challenge. This is enabling all groups of pupils to make strong progress, particularly in English and mathematics.

Since the last inspection you have ensured that pupils have opportunities to write frequently and at length across a range of subjects. Pupils show great pride in their improved writing skills, enthusiastically sharing examples of their writing during the inspection. Nonetheless, as you rightly recognise, teachers' expectations for pupils' handwriting and presentation need raising further. Current pupils' work shows increasing opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning skills in mathematics, with teachers routinely guiding pupils to explain their mathematical thinking.

You have focused on improving the teaching of early reading through systematic staff training. As a result, staff are now confident in their delivery of phonics. This

consistent approach, along with investment in appropriate resources to support reading and the routine tracking of pupils' progress, is enabling pupils to get off to a flying start in their reading.

Since the last inspection you, in collaboration with your staff and underpinned by wider research, have carefully considered how the school's feedback policy can help pupils deepen their understanding. Teachers use this new approach intelligently and consistently across the school, with staff and pupils united about the positive difference this is making to learning.

You are ensuring that pupils are supported effectively to manage their behaviour. For the small number of pupils who require extra help to regulate their actions, you have implemented carefully considered support. You and your team closely analyse patterns of behaviour and these records indicate an overall reduction in behavioural incidents. Your well-thought-through work to improve attendance continues to be highly effective. Overall attendance is improving, including that of disadvantaged pupils. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is reducing, although you recognise there is work to do so this aligns more closely to national figures. Recent initiatives, such as the early morning 'magic bagels' are leading to an improvement in pupils' punctuality. You are sensibly working closely with the local authority to reduce exclusions.

Parents spoken to are unanimously positive about the improvements to the school and their children's school experience. Parents of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were particularly effusive about the support you and your staff offer their children.

Since the previous inspection, you and the leadership team have introduced effective and improved systems to monitor and track pupils' progress. You are ensuring that assessment of pupils' work is now accurate through leaders' rigorous and consistent monitoring, checks on the quality of teaching and regular discussions about pupils' progress with teachers. The school's performance information is further scrutinised by the trust's improvement lead to confirm its accuracy. You ensure that interventions are having the necessary impact and adjust accordingly in order that pupils may make the best possible progress.

Leaders are taking a measured approach to the development of the curriculum and this work is firmly underway. They are starting to make effective use of teachers' skills and expertise in their curriculum design. Pupils study a broad range of subjects, regularly enjoying music and sport. In addition, by ensuring that wider activities such as visits to the town of Rochester and to the Royal Engineers Museum have a specific purpose linked to pupils' learning, you are enriching the curriculum in a notably meaningful way. You and your team recognise that there is further work to be done to ensure consistency in curriculum provision across all subjects and classes, as well as in the early years. Work in current pupils' books

shows that some areas of the curriculum remain underdeveloped, for instance in geography and art.

Leaders have responded swiftly to the recommendations in the recent external review of pupil premium funding, ensuring that this funding is used carefully to support improved outcomes for this group of pupils.

Since the previous inspection, the local governing body has strengthened, and governors are showing a better understanding of their roles. They actively seek and receive appropriate training, so they are fully equipped to challenge and support school improvement.

The trust is providing adequate challenge and support to school leaders, particularly for finance, governance and verification of the school's own performance information. However, the trust has been less successful in supporting school leaders in the developing the curriculum, provision for early years and improving the quality of teaching. Further work is needed to intensify support in these areas. As a first step, the trust has recently welcomed new members of the board with the relevant expertise.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

Leaders and managers are taking effective actions towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

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

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust (RMET), the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Medway. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Frances Nation
Her Majesty's Inspector