

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



16 May 2022

Denise Todd
Headteacher
Ashley Primary School
Temple Park Road
South Shields
Tyne and Wear
NE34 0QA

Dear Mrs Todd

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Ashley Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 6 April 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 October 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. I discussed the ongoing impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in my 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 local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

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

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for South Tyneside. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

David Milligan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 6 April 2022

Context

Since the previous section 5 inspection, the headteacher has returned to school following a long-term absence. During the headteacher's absence, the deputy headteacher acted as full-time headteacher.

Shortly after the section 5 inspection, the chair of governors and a number of other governors resigned from their positions on the governing body. The school currently has a governing body consisting of six members. This includes a new chair of governors and four new members.

In January 2022, leaders began consultation with We Inspire Success Excellence (WISE) multi-academy trust. In February 2022, the department for education brokered a formal agreement for the school to become an academy as part of WISE on 1 September 2022.

During the autumn term 2021, the school was significantly affected by COVID-19. A substantial number of staff and pupils were absent from school. The absence of senior leaders and other staff members restricted the development of school priorities.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Leaders, in consultation with WISE multi-academy trust, have identified key areas in the curriculum for improvement. A timetable for individual subject review is in place. Science, history, geography and art have all been evaluated, with new plans now in place. Leaders have looked more carefully at what needs to be taught in each subject. These subjects now have well-sequenced knowledge content so that pupils can start to build a secure bank of knowledge as they move through the school. The use of new resources in science, history and geography is having a positive impact on outcomes for pupils. Pupils talk about what they have studied and say that the new booklets are helping them to remember and retrieve information more easily.

Other foundation subjects are due to be reviewed by spring term 2023. Currently, plans in these subjects do not highlight the vital component blocks of knowledge that pupils need in order to be successful.

Leaders are aware that the school improvement plan needs amending in the light of the previous section 5 inspection. Currently, there is a tracking document in place to monitor actions but this needs to be more focused on key priorities with specific actions. The long-term absence of senior leaders has had an impact on the development of the improvement plan.

Leaders have introduced a new reading programme to support pupils who are learning to read. Pupils are responding well to the programme. Pupils receive two phonics sessions

per day and for those who fall behind there are additional sessions of targeted support. Leaders are currently in discussion with WISE multi-academy trust regarding the use of their reading programme for pupils in key stage 2.

Previously, leaders, including governors, recognised that aspects of safeguarding needed to be tighter. Although pupils were safe, there were concerns around policy, procedures and staff knowledge around safeguarding. This has been transformed in the school. Leaders have introduced rigorous systems to ensure that all staff receive updated training, know procedures and are confident in their safeguarding duties. The headteacher and child and family welfare officers work effectively with vulnerable pupils. They also provide useful support for staff and families. Leaders have engaged with external safeguarding providers so that staff receive a universal overview of safeguarding but also training that is pertinent to the context of the school. The single central record is compliant and well organised.

Leaders have identified that improvements need to be made in early years. Leaders in early years have not had clear direction and support in how to improve the setting. The curriculum is currently under review, with new plans being implemented in summer term 2022.

Following the previous section 5 inspection, leaders have actively sought support. They are keen to work as part of WISE multi-academy trust and have fully embraced the support on offer. Subject leaders talk positively about the training, professional dialogue and good practice sharing opportunities that are already available. Senior leaders are engaged in high-quality strategic discussions about how to make rapid and long-term improvements.

Staff are very supportive of recent changes. They see the impact that revised curriculum plans are having for pupils. They feel supported by senior leaders and appreciate how new planning resources support workload.

Governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are aware of their statutory duties and take their safeguarding role seriously. They know that improvements to the curriculum are required and that subject leaders need support to develop their expertise. They are currently engaged in discussions with WISE multi-academy trust to drive improvements forward.

Additional support

Leaders' early engagement with WISE multi-academy trust has been successful. Areas for improvement have been swiftly identified. Subject leaders have received helpful training which has improved the curriculum in identified subjects.

External support from safeguarding providers has been used effectively by the school. Leaders have identified gaps in knowledge and tailored training to meet the needs of the staff.

Evidence

The inspector met with senior and middle leaders, the designated leader of safeguarding, family welfare officers, teachers, governors, support staff and pupils. The inspector spoke to the service manager for education and standards from the local authority and chief executive officer for WISE multi-academy trust. The inspector reviewed the single central record and vetting checks for teaching and non-teaching staff. The inspector also looked at pupils' books. School documentation was reviewed, including the school development plan and self-evaluation document.