

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



3 December 2018

Mrs Rae Aldous  
Executive Principal  
Grove Primary School  
Framfield Road  
Carlton Colville  
Lowestoft  
Suffolk  
NR33 8RQ

Dear Mrs Aldous,

### **Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Grove Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 14 November 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection that took place in March 2017. The monitoring inspection report is below.

#### **Evidence**

During this inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, other senior and subject leaders, representatives from the governing body and the director for school improvement from the Active Learning Trust (the trust).

Together, with the deputy headteacher, we visited every class to observe pupils learning and to evaluate work in pupils' books. With the leadership team, I scrutinised a range of pupils' workbooks to consider pupils' progression in subjects other than English and mathematics.

I evaluated a wide range of documentation, including the school's record for the suitable employment of staff.

## **Context**

Since my previous visit in April 2018, you have continued in your role as executive headteacher. The deputy headteacher and other senior leaders have also continued in their roles.

Eight teachers have started to work at the school from September 2018, three of whom have returned after a period of leave. Currently there are no vacancies in the teaching and learning team.

## **Inspection findings**

You have continued to improve the provision for pupils and the quality of teaching and learning. You have successfully ensured that the areas of strength identified in my previous letter to the school have been maintained. The environment has improved further, and the school is a bright and inviting place in which to learn.

The quality of governance continues to develop and improve under the strong leadership of the chair of governors. Governors have appropriate systems in place to hold leaders to account and to offer support where needed. Since the previous monitoring inspection, governors have sharpened the focus of their school visits. Now these visits are linked carefully to the school's improvement plans. Consequently, the governing body has a clear and accurate understanding of what is working well and where further improvements need to be made.

Safeguarding continues to be effective. You, governors and school staff rightly continue to check and refine the school's safeguarding procedures to ensure that they are in line with statutory guidance. Staff are suitably trained in child protection. Records of recruitment and suitability of staff are meticulous and well kept.

You continue to develop both the capacity and quality of leadership. There are more frequent opportunities for the two schools you oversee to work together and share expertise. This is proving effective, especially in the leadership of mathematics. New leaders appreciate the quality of training they receive from the wide range of courses offered by the trust.

Through your systematic checking on the quality of provision, you have an accurate and detailed understanding of where strengths and weakness lie. You, governors and the trust analyse and evaluate the progress you are making against your well-designed plans. You have set clear priorities and milestones that are realistic and help all leaders to support and check on school improvements.

Teachers and support staff are provided with the professional development they need so that the quality of teaching improves. Staff are becoming increasingly skilled at helping different groups of pupils make better progress. When pupils are

provided with activities that are well matched to their abilities, they are making much better progress. This is especially the case in upper key stage 2.

Parents and carers are regaining confidence in the school leadership and the quality of education provided. Most parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View would now recommend the school and say that it is well led and managed. Pupils equally told me that they enjoy attending the school and can identify many changes and improvements. One pupil stated, 'It is so much better. We have better equipment and the library has improved.'

You do not shy away from challenging practice that does not meet with your high standards and you are quick to deal with teaching that is not of the highest quality for pupils. Some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching are still apparent in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2. Where this is the case, it is because teaching is not planned as precisely as it should be for the mixed-age classes. The expectation of the most able pupils is not sufficiently high, and the provision for those who require support is not precise enough.

You have revised the curriculum provision. Pupils are experiencing an improved and broader range of subjects. However, there is still more to be achieved to ensure that pupils receive a consistent and high-quality provision in all key stages and across a wide range of subjects.

Since the previous monitoring inspection, you have developed the outside area in the school's extensive grounds. The woodland area has been skilfully planned so that pupils of all ages can enjoy and develop their physical skills. During the inspection, pupils were learning about campfires and cooking on an open fire. All safety considerations were in place so that pupils could enjoy and deepen their knowledge and understanding about cooking outdoors. You are using this additional resource effectively to help some pupils, who find aspects of learning more challenging, learn about resilience and build self-esteem.

You continue to use your school's assessment system rigorously to check that pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in all year groups. You are using this information well to provide additional support where pupils need it.

At the end of the academic year 2017/18, the proportion of pupils who left Year 6 reaching the nationally required standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined had significantly improved. These pupils were better prepared for their transition into secondary school than was previously the case. Inspection evidence confirms that the quality of teaching in upper key stage 2 remains a strength.

Subject leaders have quickly identified mathematics as an area for further improvement, especially in key stage 1 and in lower key stage 2. You have strengthened the leadership of mathematics since May 2018 and now have shared leadership across both schools. Some of the successes of your chosen approach can

be seen in the improved resources available for pupils. Pupils' books in Years 1 and 2 demonstrate that they are using a wide range of suitable equipment to help them deepen their understanding of how numbers work.

Additional expertise and support from the trust's advisers in the early years classes are proving successful. You have improved the environment and ensured that children have many opportunities to develop their writing and mathematical skills. Staff have successfully implemented the changes required in Reception. Children are very settled, are enjoying their learning and are making rapid progress from their starting points. There is still more to be done in the Nursery class to ensure that children have access to all the areas of learning, so they can be even better prepared for starting school in Reception.

You have identified that increasing standards in phonics and the link to teaching spelling rules are areas for improvement. Older pupils' work demonstrates that they have a less-than-secure understanding of simple spelling rules and lack secure strategies to help them learn and succeed. The proportion of pupils who reached the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check remained below the national average again in 2018. The teaching of early reading and its link with spelling requires a leadership review to assess how this aspect of teaching can be improved and developed.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

leaders and managers are continuing to take effective actions towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

To continue to improve the quality of leadership and management further:

- ensure that adults plan and deliver learning so pupils in mixed-age classes make good progress from their starting points in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2
- review and improve the teaching of phonics and spelling so more pupils secure their knowledge and can apply their understanding effectively.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Active Learning Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kim Hall

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in March 2017.**

- Ensure that leaders, governors and the academy trust have a strategic overview of the school so that they:
  - understand their roles and responsibilities in identifying the strengths of the school and areas for improvement
  - develop a focused, accurate action plan for school improvement that is linked closely to raising standards at the school
  - monitor regularly and robustly, so that they can evaluate all aspects of the school's work
  - check assessments of pupils' progress, to ensure that this information is used to improve outcomes for all groups of pupils.
- Improve teaching, learning and outcomes for pupils, by:
  - increasing challenge for the most able pupils in lessons, particularly in mathematics and writing, so that they make as much progress as they can
  - providing greater opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning skills
  - creating more extended writing opportunities across the curriculum
  - setting consistently high expectations for the presentation of pupils' work.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers.