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Tim Muggridge
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Dear Mr Muggridge

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Cliffe Woods Primary School

Following my visit with Mark Goode, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 13 September 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. These included personnel files which contained information about appointment and recruitment procedures. Inspectors looked at a range of the school's documentation, including records of governors' activities, the curriculum relating to pupils' personal, social, health and emotional development and information about pupils' attendance and behaviour. They met with the headteacher, senior leaders, the chair of the governing body and a group of staff. They observed playtimes and lunchtime and had lunch with pupils. They took account of 78 responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View and also a recent school survey of parents' views. An inspector met with parents at the start of the school day. Both inspectors visited all parts of the school, one inspector with pupils and the other with the headteacher.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

The school is larger than most primary schools. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups, pupils who speak English as an additional language, those entitled to free school meals and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are all well below average. The school population is very stable, with very few pupils joining or leaving the school during the course of their time in primary education. There has been a change of headteacher since the previous inspection and the senior leadership team has been strengthened; otherwise staffing is stable.

Content

Staff, governors, pupils and parents have coped well with some very difficult circumstances since the previous inspection. Parents have demonstrated their confidence in the leaders and staff. The school is popular and continues to be oversubscribed. Parents who responded to Parent View or to the school's own survey, and those we met during the inspection, agree overwhelmingly that children are safe, happy and well looked after in school. They express confidence in school leaders and appreciate improvements in communication, approachability and availability of staff and senior leaders.

The headteacher and designated safeguarding leaders ensure that health, safety and well-being of pupils have a high priority. Safeguarding is a standing item on each staff meeting agenda. There are thorough, up-to-date policies and appropriate checking procedures carried out before staff, volunteers and governors are allowed to spend time with children in school. The recruitment and selection procedures to appoint staff, including senior staff, are rigorous. For example, governors engaged external support and guidance to ensure a high level of scrutiny when appointing the headteacher last year.

Staff and governors are well trained. All staff and governors undertook in-depth training earlier this year to make sure they are aware of all aspects of safeguarding, including the most recent guidance about aspects such as protecting pupils from the risks of extremism. Several senior staff are trained at an enhanced level. All staff understand their responsibilities to keep pupils safe, are alert to signs which might cause concern and follow the correct procedures. Some staff are also trained in particular interventions to support individual pupils, for example in safe handling and play therapy.

There is a strong emphasis on internet safety. The school has recently strengthened its systems to monitor and ensure the safe use of the internet for pupils and staff.

The curriculum is planned so that there are good opportunities for pupils to use computers safely and to discuss serious safeguarding issues such as the use of social media. The curriculum also enables pupils to develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and safe, build positive relationships and value other people regardless of differences. Pupils enjoy coming to school, are confident to speak up and behave well; attendance is above average. There are high levels of staff supervision at all times and positive relationships between staff and pupils. As a result, the pupils say they are happy and feel safe in school.

Governors have guided the school successfully through difficult times and have sought and used expert advice appropriately. They carry out regular safeguarding and health and safety checks and ensure that policies are agreed and in use. The systems for monitoring the effectiveness of the policies could be tighter, for example by checking the work of the school to keep children safe and evaluating for themselves the impact of actions taken.

External support

The headteacher, governors and safeguarding leaders have positive and effective relationships with agencies such as social services and seek advice when appropriate. The school has benefited from clear guidance from the designated officer. This guidance supported the chair of governors, in particular, to manage a very difficult situation successfully. The school also benefited from leadership support from a national leader of education and a nearby multi-academy trust.

Priorities for further improvement

- Tighten further the monitoring role of governors in evaluating the effectiveness and impact of safeguarding systems and procedures.

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

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald
Her Majesty's Inspector