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S Gulzar
Headteacher
Heathfield Primary School
Heathfield Road
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Dear Mr Gulzar

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Heathfield Primary School

Following my visit with Jeremy Spencer, Her Majesty's Inspector to your school on 30 April – 1 May 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because the Chief Inspector was concerned about the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements and leadership and management at the school.

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. They met with the executive headteacher, the executive deputy headteacher, the head of school, the assistant headteachers, staff members, members of the governing body, groups of pupils and a representative from the local authority. They also scrutinised governing body minutes, staff training records, key policies, behaviour records and curriculum plans.

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

The school's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

The quality of leadership and management requires improvement.

Context

The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is higher than average. This is additional funding provided by the government for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after in public care. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above the national average, but the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is lower than the national average. All pupils are from minority ethnic groups, and nearly all pupils speak English as an additional language. The largest ethnic groups in the school are Pakistani and Bangladeshi.

The school federated with Prince Albert School on the 1 February 2014, with a new governing body overseeing the two schools. The executive headteacher was also appointed at the same time. An executive deputy headteacher was appointed over the two schools in March 2014. There has been a significant turnover of staff and many have either left the school or have resigned from their post.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils say that behaviour has improved and that most pupils behave well in lessons. A new behaviour system has been introduced which pupils report is having a positive impact on how they behave. This is used consistently across the school. Incidents of poor behaviour are logged and monitored. Records show that poor behaviour often occurs, but incidents are reducing.

Some bullying happens on the playground, but pupils say that is quickly dealt with and as a result, report that they feel safe. Pupils told Her Majesty's Inspectors they could turn to a teacher, play worker, learning mentor or peer mediator if there was a problem. There is an understanding of most types of bullying and pupils understand about the dangers of the internet and social networking sites. However, pupils did not show any awareness of homophobic bullying.

While safeguarding requirements are met, the work to keep pupils safe from any possible risks of extremism and radicalisation lacks clarity. The school has not engaged with the local authority's 'Prevent' programme, a government funded initiative intended to prevent radicalisation and violent extremism. The executive headteacher has plans to develop staff and pupils' understanding of such risks but this has not happened to date.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

A new leadership team is in place with a clear focus on raising standards and improving the quality of teaching. Priority has been given to developing pupils' basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. However, this has led to a shrinking of the curriculum and some important aspects are not taught in enough detail. For example, there is too little time given for pupils to be taught religious education (RE) and personal, social and health education (PSHE). The plans of how these subjects will be taught do not make it clear what needs to be covered in different year groups.

Monitoring of the curriculum has focused on checking how well literacy and numeracy is taught. Too little regard has been given to how well pupils' skills are developed in some other subjects. As a result, leaders are unclear about how well the full curriculum is being delivered across all year groups.

The school has recently experienced a high turnover of staff. This instability and the raised expectations of senior leaders have made some staff feel anxious about their jobs. Some members of staff feel their work is not given credit. Some staff told Her Majesty's Inspectors that there is a divide among staff and this is leading to mistrust and lack of unity across the school.

The governing body has been very recently formed. In the short amount of time they have been together, governors have developed a strong working relationship with senior leaders and are focused on the raising of standards for all groups of pupils. However, they are not yet developed close enough links with staff and, as a result, they are not aware of low staff morale. Some governors hold an overly positive view of how well the school is performing. Governors are not well informed about the potential risks associated with radicalisation and extremism and how these might impact on the school.

Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements. Staff have received training in child protection and safeguarding and senior leaders have been trained how to recruit staff safely. Checks to ensure staff are suitable to work with children are routinely made and procedures to make sure staff comply with regulations are carried out. However, the school is not rigorous enough in fully checking the backgrounds of those who have lived or worked overseas.

A new child protection policy has been written, but it is unclear when this was ratified by the governing body. Some other key policies are not up to date and some do not specifically apply to the school's needs.

Attendance rates are improving and pupils are encouraged to attend school. Rates of absence are rigorously tracked and monitored.

External support

The local authority holds a very positive view of the school. They have great confidence in the leadership team and believe the school is going from strength to strength. Inspectors do not fully support this view.

Close links have been made with Prince Albert School and many of this school's policies and procedures have been adopted by Heathfield. However, this means that not all policies apply to specifically to Heathfield.

Priorities for further improvement

As a matter of urgency, the school should:

- ensure that the governing body hold an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are more proactive in gathering first hand evidence about the work of the school
- ensure staff are trained in identifying the potential risks associated with radicalisation and extremism in schools and that key policies, including the child protection policy, outline clear procedures to follow if staff suspect that extremist views are being promoted
- update policies and ensure they reflect the current position and specific needs of the school
- address the issues of low staff morale.
- ensure that pupils understand about all types of bullying.

Her Majesty's Inspectors will continue to monitor the school and will consider this is in determining the timing of the next full inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham City, to the Secretary of State for Education and the Chair of the Governing Body. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jane Millward
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc Chair of the Governing Body