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9 April 2014

Mrs Patricia Davies
Interim headteacher
Regents Park Community Primary School
Arthur Street
Birmingham
B10 0NJ

Dear Mrs Davies

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Regents Park Community Primary School

Following my visit with Heather Yaxley, Her Majesty's Inspector to your school on 7-8 April 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 following a request from the Secretary of State.

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. Meetings were held with the interim headteacher, the Chair and two other representatives of the Governing Body, senior leaders, teachers and non-teaching staff, a representative of the local authority, and a senior leader from a school that is providing additional support. Her Majesty's Inspectors held discussions with two groups of pupils. Informal meetings were held with parents and carers as they brought their children to school.

Her Majesty's Inspectors also examined the school's attendance records, leaders' evaluations of the school's performance, the school's curriculum, minutes of governing body meetings, pupils' books and a number of other documents about the work of the school. They also spent time checking pupils' work in classrooms and corridors, and scrutinised work in pupils' books, with a particular focus on their topic and religious education books. Her Majesty's Inspectors spent time in lessons and also observed pupils' behaviour in other areas of the school.

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

This school is larger than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language is high. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is below average. Fewer pupils begin or leave the school at times other than the usual starting points than in other schools.

The school's headteacher and deputy headteacher resigned from the school in September 2013. The results of the national tests for pupils in Year 6, in 2013, have been annulled by the Department for Education. This followed concerns from the Standards and Testing Agency about the validity of the results.

There have been significant changes to the school's leadership and to staffing since the school's last inspection. The school is currently led by an interim headteacher. However, she will be leaving the school shortly. She will remain on the governing body to support the school. A new interim headteacher will begin at the school later this month as governors prepare to recruit a substantive headteacher. A new Chair of the Governing Body was appointed in October 2013.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most pupils behaved well during the monitoring inspection. However, when pupils worked with teachers other than their usual class teacher there was a noticeable deterioration in their behaviour and their engagement with learning. Pupils said that this is typical of behaviour in the school.

Pupils demonstrated a good understanding of different types of bullying and how to keep themselves safe. Older pupils had an understanding of how to stay safe when using computers and the internet. Pupils said they feel safe in school and that staff deal with any incidents of bullying effectively. Pupils' attendance is below the national average but is showing some recent signs improvement.

Pupils make an effective contribution to each other's well-being through a well-established peer-mediator system, which operates in the playground. This involves pupils sharing any concerns they have with specially trained pupils who helps to solve their problem. Pupils said that they value this system and that it helps them to

think about their own and other pupils' behaviour more carefully. Pupils from different backgrounds and cultures were seen to work and play together well. Pupils spoke confidently about how each person is valued equally in the school, regardless of their personal beliefs.

The quality of leadership and management

Despite the recent improvements since the appointment of the interim headteacher, senior leaders, including the governing body, have failed to check on the school's work. Other leaders have not fully understood their roles. As a result, there has been a lack of clarity about what should be done to improve the school.

Leaders have been slow to strengthen the school's systems for protecting pupils from the possible risk of being exposed to extremism. The interim headteacher has begun work to improve the quality and breadth of the curriculum, which until very recently has been focused almost entirely on developing basic skills in literacy and numeracy.

Over time the governing body failed to provide enough challenge to senior leaders. However, the new Chair of the Governing Body has got off to a strong start. She has checked the school's arrangements and procedures for safeguarding pupils, and ensured that they meet requirements. She has also challenged senior leaders to sharpen the school's procedures further, for example through closer consideration of the risks of radicalisation and extremism and to raise awareness of other issues such as forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

A number of the school's key policies have been revised, including the child protection policy, the behaviour policy, and the assessment policy. However, these changes have only happened recently. Governors do not check carefully enough if the school's policies and curriculum are being implemented consistently and rigorously by staff. For example, work in pupils' books and folders indicate that personal, social and health education, and religious education are not always taught in enough depth. For example, in religious education lessons pupils learn about a range of festivals and celebrations linked to different faiths, but they do not explore different religious beliefs in the same detail.

Staff and governors have received up-to-date training in safeguarding and child protection. Leaders have been trained to recruit staff safely and carry out routine checks on whether staff are suitable to work with children. As part of the recruitment process, however, the range of background checks that are made on those who have lived or worked overseas are not always recorded systematically. The school's procedures to check on the suitability of visitors to the school are not always rigorous enough. The school's child protection policy, although comprehensive in many respects, does not outline clear procedures to follow if staff suspect that children may be at risk from extremism

External support

The local authority has not provided support for the school's leaders to help them understand how they can deal with risks of extremism or radicalisation. The local authority has, however, supported the school in strengthening the quality of the governing body through brokering the appointment of the new Chair, who has significant safeguarding experience.

The school has received good support from a local teaching alliance. In particular, this has helped staff to improve their skills in assessing pupils' work and ensured external validation of the school's assessment data. The teaching alliance is also in the process of organising an external review of the governing body. Governors are keen to develop their skills and welcome this. Effective support has been provided to the governing body to help them to recruit an experienced new interim headteacher for the summer and autumn terms 2014.

The headteacher has successfully brokered good support from senior leaders in other local schools, for example through appointing a senior leader to work with staff for one day each week to strengthen the quality of the curriculum and to develop the skills of subject leaders.

Priorities for further improvement

As a matter of urgency, the school should:

- carry out an external review of governance in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved
- ensure staff are trained in identifying risks of extremism in schools and that key policies, including the child protection policy, outline clear procedures to follow if staff identify risks associated with extremism
- undertake better risk assessments to ensure that visitors to the school do not pose a risk of harm to pupils
- revisit safeguarding policies and recruitment procedures to ensure consistent gathering and recording of additional checks for staff who have lived or worked overseas
- ensure that leaders, including the governing body, check that school policies, including the curriculum policy, are implemented consistently and rigorously enough across the school.

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, the Secretary of State for Education, and the Chair of the Governing Body. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Spencer
Her Majesty's Inspector