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Mrs S Hewitt-Clarkson
Headteacher
Anderton Park Primary School
Dennis Road
Sparkhill
Birmingham
B12 8BL

Dear Mrs Hewitt-Clarkson

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Anderton Park Primary School

Following my visit with Linda McGill, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 30 September 2014, 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 due to concerns about aspects of the quality of leadership and management, including governance, and the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in the school.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We met with you and other senior leaders, a group of pupils, the Vice Chair of the Governing Body and two other members, and a representative of the local authority. We scrutinised the minutes of governing body meetings, a range of statutory policies, curriculum plans for religious education and personal, social health education, and up to date information about pupils' achievement and attendance. My colleague and I also made short visits to a number of lessons in the morning, observed pupils' behaviour at break and lunchtime, and considered the views of the 50 staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire.

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

The school's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

Context

The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school with 706 pupils on roll. Almost all of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups and this has been the case for many years. Most pupils are from Pakistani and other Asian or Asian British heritages although there is an increasing number of pupils from White British and Eastern European backgrounds. Most pupils speak English as an additional language. Just over 40% of pupils are eligible for free school meals which is much higher than the national average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly average.

Leaders and teachers have high expectations of what pupils should achieve and there have been improvements in pupils' achievement, including those supported by additional government funding, since the previous inspection. The Vice Chair of the Governing Body explained that governors were pleased that you, as headteacher, are determined that the school continues to strive to do the best it can to make sure that all pupils are fully prepared to take a positive role in modern Britain. Just one example of this is where you and staff have led pupils in discussions about the British values of democracy, the rule of law, fairness and tolerance of all.

All staff, including non-teaching staff, receive annual child protection and safeguarding training. This training is comprehensive and reflects the most recent guidance from the Department for Education. The content makes clear how to spot signs of a wide range of possible abuse and what action staff should take when they have concerns. The teachers and support staff we spoke to had a good knowledge of the issues and what to do if they have concerns. All members of the senior leadership team have attended enhanced safeguarding training. The Vice Chair of the Governing Body has also attended training on these issues organised by the local authority. As a result of training, leaders decided that the school's curriculum needed to have an increased emphasis on promoting awareness of how to tackle issues related to any intolerance of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Senior leaders and staff governors are trained in tackling extremist views and preventing risks of radicalisation by understanding the government's Prevent strategy. The information from this training is shared with governors.

The school's child protection policy is currently undergoing its annual review and due to be presented to governors later in October. The current policy has good references to the potential risks, such as risks related to gang culture, child sexual exploitation, extremist views and radicalisation, and female genital mutilation. The policy also reflects recent learning from national investigations into the death of children and emphasises, for example, that staff must be prepared to 'think the unthinkable' and ask questions of parents that might be seen to be 'difficult'. My scrutiny of case study examples of children who have been at risk confirms that this aspect of the policy is rigorously put into practice. Leaders tackle issues related to child protection with tenacity and urgency. This includes refusing to accept when cases are 'closed' by social services but leaders still have serious concerns about a child's safety.

While there are many strengths of the school's policy, there is a lack of written clarity about how any allegations made against the headteacher should be handled. In contrast, recent training to all staff was very clear about this. The current policy does not contain contact details to help staff to make a direct referral to the Chair of the Governing Body or social services if they need to do so. The school's family and relationships education policy was approved in October 2012 after lengthy consultation with parents and governors. This policy has not been updated to reflect the good work of the school in helping pupils to understand the myriad of relationships that exist in modern Britain.

You explained to me that, in the past, you and other leaders have had to be extremely insistent with some governors, parents and members of the community who have not shared the school's ethos of promoting equality of opportunity and tolerance. You and your team continue to tackle head on any statements of intolerance that are made by pupils or their parents. In doing so, you seek to help pupils understand why such statements are wrong and have no place in British society, linking with the school's focus that 'nobody is an outsider'. You take a similar approach with parents and when necessary involve other agencies, including the police. A scrutiny of the school's racist incident logs confirms that staff at the school deal well with any issues that occur.

School leaders ensure that pupils experience a broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils described their enjoyment of creative subjects such as music and art as well as English and mathematics. The school follows Birmingham's Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education. The pupils we spoke to have an understanding of major world religions such as Islam, Christianity and Hinduism. They were able to explain similarities between these religions such as the importance of fairness and respect. School assemblies reflect the predominantly Islamic heritage of pupils but also make links with Christianity and other beliefs and those with no beliefs. For example, in a Year 3 and 4 assembly, pupils were able to explain that the festival of Eid al-Adha and harvest festivals were opportunities to help people who were less fortunate.

Governors continue to have a good understanding of the school's strengths and the areas that need to be developed further. The governors we spoke to, and the evidence from minutes of governing body meetings, indicate that there is a collective vision and determination that all aspects of the school's work reflect fairness and equality of opportunity.

Historically, the school has sought approval from the local Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) to be disapplied from the requirement that collective worship is broadly Christian. This is because the majority of pupils were from families who followed the Muslim faith. An Extraordinary General Meeting of the governing body was called to discuss whether or not to renew the request for the school to be disapplied from the requirement. At this meeting, governors agreed to submit a further request to SACRE. However, there is another meeting scheduled to discuss the decision further.

The governing body is planning to reconstitute its membership. In doing so, the Vice Chair of the Governing Body with whom we spoke understands that it is vital that all members are committed to the school's values and have both the skills and time to make a positive and significant contribution to setting the strategic direction of the school.

Our evidence is that governors have been decisive in dealing with individual governors that have not followed agreed procedures.

External support

School leaders work well with a range of agencies, including social services, the Prevent team and the police to help keep pupils safe. There has been limited contact with the local authority since the previous inspection. However, officers have attended meetings of the governing body to provide guidance. The lead officer has provided some initial support to the Clerk of the Governing Body and the headteacher with regards to the proposed reconstitution of membership.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that the child protection policy, currently under review, is unambiguous about what staff should do if there is an allegation made against the headteacher, including relevant contact details, therefore reflecting the content of the high quality training all staff have undertaken.
- Ensure that the family and relationships education policy accurately reflects the school's good practice in helping pupils understand about relationships in modern Britain.
- Ensure that, if reconstituted, all members of the governing body have the necessary skills and time to commit to setting the school's strategic direction and that each member is committed to promoting equality and fairness for all, thereby reflecting the school's ethos.

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

Yours sincerely

James McNeillie
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc Shafiq Sharif, Chair of the Governing Body