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Mrs J Palmer
Headteacher
Mayfield School
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Devon
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Dear Mrs Palmer

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Mayfield School

Following my visit with Mark Lindfield, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 6 and 7 October 2015, 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 in response to a complaint made to Ofsted which raised serious concerns. The complaint was deemed to be a qualifying complaint and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that an unannounced inspection of the school should take place to follow up the whole-school issues that were raised. Inspectors sought to establish whether:

- leaders and the governing body are effective in monitoring and evaluating policy and practice for behaviour management and safeguarding within the school
- staff are suitably trained and able to seek advice and support when required
- safeguarding procedures are adequate, including the response to pupils presenting challenging behaviour
- suitable adjustments are made to behaviour management procedures according to the pupils' needs and disabilities.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents and policies relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. Minutes of governing body meetings, attendance records, the school's tracking and records of behaviour incidents, and staff training logs were also scrutinised. Case studies of children in care and those with child protection plans were reviewed.

Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher for the primary phase who also acts as the school leader for behaviour, the sixth form centre leader, the Chestnut Centre leader, the school's business manager and the outreach leader. A telephone conversation with the Torbay head of service for those with a disability or special educational need took place on 6 October 2015. A telephone conversation with the local authority designated child protection officer took place on 7 October 2015. Inspectors met with two members of the governing body and a parent. The responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) were used to gain a representative sample of parents' views.

Inspectors observed pupils arriving at school, at break, lunchtime and at the end of the school day. A sample of lessons was visited at all three sites. Inspectors spoke informally to a number of pupils during different parts of the school day to gather their views about behaviour and safety at the school.

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

The school's safeguarding arrangements do not meet requirements.

Context

Mayfield School is situated in Torquay and caters for children aged 2–19 with severe and profound learning difficulties. There is full-time early years provision for children from the age of two. In September 2013, an off-site unit in Brixham, called Chestnut, which caters for 21 primary aged children with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties opened. In September 2015, an upper sixth form college was established at Occombe, Preston as part of the school's post-16 provision.

A minority of pupils have an autistic spectrum disorder and a small minority have sensory and/or physical disability. Most pupils have a statement, or an education and health care plan, for their learning difficulties. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is low and a few pupils come from families who speak English as an additional language. Around half of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium. This is additional government funding for children known to be eligible for free school meals or those children who are looked after by a local authority. Pupils come from all parts of Torbay and a few come from adjacent authorities. The majority of children travel to school in buses or taxis. Some are transported by parents or carers.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in ensuring that safeguarding and child protection arrangements keep children safe

Leaders, managers and the governing body do not have an overarching strategy for monitoring and evaluating the school's safeguarding arrangements. Not enough first-hand monitoring activities are undertaken to check on the effectiveness of the

safeguarding arrangements in the school. For example, school leaders and governors have not carried out the annual review of the child protection policy. This contravenes statutory requirements and hampers any meaningful evaluation of how well children are kept safe. Leaders and governors have not kept abreast of statutory guidance as set out in *Keeping Children Safe in Education* published by the Department for Education in July 2015. As a result of this, the *Keeping Children Safe in Education* statutory guidance to safeguard children is not being followed to ensure that safeguarding policies and recording methods meet requirements or to improve the quality of staff training.

The poor monitoring and organisation of staff records has meant that senior leaders and the governing body have not ensured that all staff have had the training they need in an appropriate timeframe or at the required intervals. For example, the governing body has not ensured that all staff have read part one (pages 6 to 17) of *Keeping Children Safe in Education*, July 2015 as required. This is a statutory requirement and all staff must have regard to this document when carrying out their duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Leaders do not evaluate the impact of training to ensure that practice is improving. As a result, some staff have not completed the required training in safeguarding and first aid. For example, the effectiveness of the online course that the school uses to refresh staff's safeguarding awareness has not been appropriately monitored or evaluated. There have been insufficient checks to see if the online training is completed on time, or if it is useful to staff and is helping to keep children safe. The number of attempts to pass the course is not used to identify where some staff may need further training and guidance. The induction of new staff has included basic requirements in safeguarding children and first aid, but has not covered the statutory guidance in *Keeping Children Safe in Education*, July 2015.

Leaders and the governing body have not been effective in monitoring and evaluating policy and practice for behaviour management and safeguarding within the school. Too often, child protection files are disorganised and do not include records of all the correspondence with social services. For example, evidence of email trails or telephone calls is sometimes missing. This results in a lack of a clear chronology of events. Senior leaders and the governing body have failed to pick up these omissions. Incidents of physical restraints are not consistently recorded at each site. On some sites they are handwritten and signed and at others they are entered straight into an electronic system. Details of further actions to modify the curriculum, record modifications and pupils' views are not clearly captured. These differences in approach make it difficult for the governing body to monitor the school's management of behaviour effectively. The school's procedures and records to assess risk are not consistent. They are often too generic and do not meet individual pupils' needs. Senior leaders and the governing body have not ensured that all of the risk assessments are appropriate and consistent with legislation, particularly for residential visits.

Despite the inherent weaknesses in the monitoring and evaluation of safeguarding by senior leaders and governors there remains some good practice at individual teacher level. Staff regularly record concerns and share these with senior leaders. They feel able to request advice and support when required. Representatives from the local authority are clear that the school shares concerns and seeks advice appropriately. The day-to-day contact and care given to pupils, alongside the strong relationships forged with staff, produces a calm environment that helps pupils to engage and develop their social and personal skills. Behaviour management procedures are clear and positive. Responses to the challenging behaviour presented by some pupils at all three sites, as evidenced from first-hand observations and school records, are appropriate. Staff use a good range of skills and techniques to help to maintain appropriate behaviour. The minimising of the length of time that physical holds are applied and the quick calming of challenging behaviour helps to reduce tension and pupils' levels of anxiety. Reward systems are applied consistently across all areas of the school. As a result, pupils know the boundaries and rewards help them to improve their behaviour and develop an appreciation of others' needs.

External support

There has been a lack of external validation of procedures and practices to keep pupils safe and, as a consequence, key documents are out of date. The school works closely with the local authority. However, despite this, the local authority has not:

- challenged the school about the lack of an up-to-date child protection policy on the school's website
- ensured that the school's senior leaders and governing body have fulfilled their statutory duties
- responded to the school's safeguarding audit that was sent to them in the spring term of 2015
- monitored with due diligence to legislation the risk assessments sent them by the school regarding residential visits.

The school works well with social care, police and health partners. The school's safeguarding team contributes effectively to the individual plans for young people at all levels of child protection. Plans are efficiently followed through. The school receives appropriate specific advice and support from social care professionals at case conference meetings to enable pupils to overcome personal difficulties. The school works closely with other schools and the local authority to improve the care and support for pupils. For example, it is planned that the educational psychologist will deliver training and support for staff. This aims to further develop adults' communication skills to meet the specific needs of individual pupils.

Priorities for further improvement

- The headteacher and senior leaders should urgently develop a strong culture of safeguarding by:
 - ensuring there is systematic and robust monitoring of safeguarding procedures and practice, consistent across the school and all three sites
 - identifying, and subsequently filling, gaps and omissions in practice, policies and staff training
 - closely monitoring staff training to ensure that it is kept up to date and is compliant with legislation, and to ensure that practice is improving
 - ensuring that risk assessments are personalised to the needs of each individual pupil, and are appropriate and consistent with legislation
 - ensuring that pupils' records contain all the correspondence with social services and other relevant agencies, and provide a clear chronology of events.
- Urgently improve the effectiveness of the governing body in safeguarding at the school by:
 - ensuring that school policies are updated in accordance with safeguarding guidance from the Department for Education; in particular, that the school's safeguarding policy is updated annually unless an incident or new legislation or guidance suggests the need for an interim review
 - establishing an annual cycle of first-hand monitoring activities to check rigorously the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements
 - attending relevant up-to-date training to ensure that the school's leaders can be held robustly to account
 - ensuring that the local authority provides evaluations of the school's safeguarding audit and residential risk assessments.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Torbay, the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools' Commissioner and The Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector