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Mrs Jo Lacey
Acting Head of School
Park Academy
Robin Hoods Walk
Boston
Lincolnshire
PE21 9LQ

Dear Mrs Lacey

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Park Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 15 December 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 because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements and aspects of the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school.

Evidence

I scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements and met with you and other senior leaders, members of the governing body, directors from the Phoenix Family of Schools Trust and academy staff. I also spoke on the phone to the Local Authority Designated Officer and to the governor with responsibility for safeguarding. I met with a group of pupils from Key Stage 2 to discuss how the academy helps them to stay safe. I observed the pupils arriving at the academy, walking to lessons and at the end of lunchtime. I also made brief visits to each classroom and to the hall where pupils were practising their nativity plays. I scrutinised additional documentation, including the academy's behaviour logs, attendance and exclusion information, minutes from the governing body meetings, the school development plan and the pupil premium action plan. I considered the 35 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, received in the current academic year. I spoke to 25 parents and carers as they were dropping off pupils in the morning and I also considered the academy's own surveys of parents and carers and pupils.

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

The academy's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

Context

The academy is a larger than average sized primary school, with 327 pupils on roll. Just over a third of pupils are White British. Most of the other pupils are from other White backgrounds. Nearly two-thirds of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement for special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is average. There is a high mobility of pupils compared to other schools nationally. Two teachers left the academy at the end of the previous summer term. Three teachers and an instructor have joined the academy since September 2015. In addition, an assistant headteacher has returned to the academy following a secondment. The academy faces difficulty in recruiting staff. The substantive Head of School is on maternity leave. One of the school's assistant headteachers is acting Head of School.

Main Findings

The Trust, members of the governing body, academy leaders and staff work well to ensure that pupils are safe. The academy has five members of staff who are trained as designated senior persons for safeguarding. Safeguarding training for all staff is up to date, regularly reviewed and well understood by staff. All adults know how to support a child who makes a disclosure and how this is recorded and reported. Teaching and non-teaching staff are aware that they can refer any concerns they have about a child to social care if necessary.

Academy leaders have robust procedures in place for new staff to ensure that they are well aware of the academy's policies and procedures for safeguarding. Staff work well as a team to share their concerns of vulnerable pupils. The academy has extensive links with a range of outside agencies to support children and their families, both at school and at home. Staff concerns are actioned quickly and referred to the appropriate agency. Staff rigorously follow up any actions involving external agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

Academy leaders review safeguarding procedures termly. Academy staff complete a comprehensive audit, which is checked by the safeguarding governor, who asks to see all relevant documentation. The safeguarding governor has received appropriate training for this role. Finally, a member from the trust, who has responsibility for safeguarding, checks the work of the governor. As a result, policies have been updated using the latest government guidance, and safeguarding procedures are well embedded in the academy's work.

The academy leaders are very well aware of the current views of parents on Ofsted's Parent View. Of the 35 parent responses in the current academic year, the large majority of parents are critical of the school, including the standard of behaviour. Recognising the serious implications of this feedback, the academy commissioned an external company to conduct a survey of parents' views in October 2015. This had 66 responses and showed a large majority of parents are supportive of the academy's work. Of the 25 parents that the inspector spoke to, no one raised concerns about the academy. The leadership of the academy has recognised, however, that they need to build better relations with all parents and carers. This term, the academy invited parents to make Christmas decorations in Reception, make Egyptian masks in Key Stage 2 and buy and make cakes to raise money for the Macmillan cancer charity. Parents are invited into the academy for 'a bite and a book' each Wednesday to promote reading to all pupils. Participation in this initiative by parents of Key Stage 1 pupils has been good. Leaders recognise that this work needs to continue.

Pupils interviewed told me that they were happy at the academy. Pupils had a very good understanding of how to keep safe on the internet. They know not to pass on any personal details and to report anything which upsets them to their parents. The academy participated in anti-bullying week in November and parents were invited in to look at the pupils' work. Pupils showed a good understanding of most types of bullying and how to report it. They were less clear about the impact of homophobic bullying. Pupils did say that bullying does happen, infrequently. On most occasions when adults step in, the bullying stops, but not for every occasion. This reflects what a minority of older pupils said in a pupil survey that the academy carried out earlier this term. I have asked you and your team to review how you follow up any incidents of bullying to ensure that there are no repeated incidents.

Leaders regularly review the attendance of pupils. The Educational Welfare Officer closely tracks every pupil's absence and attends multi-agency meetings where there are concerns over attendance. Consequently, attendance is rising for disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in school from last year. Attendance is now broadly in line with the national average.

Pupils recognise and celebrate different cultures and most have a well-developed understanding of British values. However, pupils' knowledge and understanding of national democracy is more limited. Pupils have a good understanding of different faiths and religions. Pupils could talk in detail about Judaism and Hinduism. The school has invited a local Christian clergyman for assembly as well as a local Imam. Year 6 pupils have enjoyed learning about India and invited their parents in to taste Indian food. Pupils annually elect the members of the school council.

You and your team have recently reviewed the behaviour policy. As a result, staff are much more consistently following the policy. This has led to an increase in fixed term exclusions. When a pupil is excluded from the academy, staff check the well-being of the pupil each day and give work to be completed. If staff cannot locate the pupil, the police are called.

The number of low level behavioural issues has dropped sharply in the second half of this term compared to the first half-term. Staff told me that they support each other much better with behavioural issues, that leaders are supportive of the actions they take and that behaviour has improved. The very large majority of pupils surveyed said pupils are well behaved. Leaders have had much more involvement with parents concerning pupils' behaviour this term. The academy is calm and pupils walk about the academy in an orderly manner. Midday supervisors and teachers are liaising more closely this term and consequently behaviour has improved at lunchtime. Nevertheless, both staff and pupils say that behaviour can improve further. Some pupils' attitudes to learning need to improve to ensure that they are completing as much work as possible in lessons and are always presenting their work to a high standard in their books.

Outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage continue to improve, and remain broadly in line with the national average by the end of Reception. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 rose sharply in 2015 and standards for reading, writing and mathematics are broadly in line with the national average. However, the academy leaders have recognised the urgent need to improve standards in Key Stage 2. Directors of the Trust recognise that as a result of weak teaching, there are significant gaps in pupils' learning in Key Stage 2. The academy has increased the amount of professional development to support teachers in the improvement of their performance. Teachers have also been out to observe teaching in outstanding schools. In addition, extra teachers have been employed to release lead teachers to support and coach other teachers in the academy. It is too early to judge the impact of this work.

The pupil premium action plan does not focus sharply enough on the areas of learning in which disadvantaged pupils need support. Consequently, leaders do not analyse how much money is being spent on improving the progress and attainment of each subject. Academy leaders have recognised that this area needs to improve and have discussed commissioning a pupil premium review from an external adviser next term.

External support

The Trust is committed to improving the academy. The Trust has reorganised the roles and responsibilities of the directors to ensure that there are no conflicts of interest. The Trust has also strengthened the knowledge and expertise of the governing body of the academy. As a result, accountability measures for school leaders have been strengthened. Governors are more involved in monitoring the academy's performance and are fully aware of the need to improve leadership, the quality of teaching and to raise standards. The governor responsible for safeguarding carries out his role diligently to ensure that the academy is following policies and procedures and keeping pupils safe.

The trust has provided extra resourcing to increase staffing to improve teaching and learning. In addition, a headteacher from within the trust has been seconded to strengthen the leadership and management of the academy for two and half days a

week. The academy has also linked with a National Leader of Education to help improve leadership and management. Members of the Trust and the governing body recognise that it is too early to judge the impact of this support to improve leadership and management and raising standards.

Priorities for further improvement:

- follow up any incidents of bullying more rigorously to ensure there are no repeated incidents
- improve pupils' attitudes to learning to ensure that they complete as much learning as possible in lessons and present their work to a high standard
- continue to build positive relationships with parents and carers and to explain to them how the behaviour policy operates
- improve leadership and management so as to improve the quality of teaching and to raise standards, particularly in Key Stage 2
- organise an external review to ensure uses of pupil premium funding closely match the needs of disadvantaged pupils and improve their progress and attainment.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Lincolnshire, 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

Martin Finch
Her Majesty's Inspector