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3 November 2015

Mr I Taylor
Executive Headteacher
Kingfisher School
Clifton Close
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Worcestershire
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Dear Mr Taylor

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Kingfisher School

Following my visit to your school on 20 and 21 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 because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the school.

Evidence

I scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. I met with the executive headteacher, the assistant headteacher, the designated safeguarding lead, the intervention lead, other members of staff, pupils, a parent, the governor with responsibility for safeguarding and the Executive Principal of the Trust. I also spoke on the telephone to a representative of the local authority.

Other documents scrutinised included policies related to behaviour and safety, governors' minutes, attendance and behaviour records and staff, pupil and parental surveys conducted by the school.

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

The school's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

Context

Kingfisher School opened as a new school as part of The Advance Trust on 1 January 2014. The predecessor school closed on 31 December 2013. Other schools within the trust are Riversides School, Vale of Evesham School and Newbridge Short Stay School.

Sixty pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs attend the school. Most of the pupils are boys, more than half are eligible for the pupil premium, additional government funding to support disadvantaged pupils, and a quarter are looked after by the local authority in which they live. Almost one third of pupils attend the expanding primary provision and over two thirds are secondary-aged. All pupils use shared facilities, so primary-aged pupils use specialist classrooms, but the primary and secondary pupils are taught separately. None of the pupils currently on roll are from minority ethnic groups.

The head of school has been absent since July 2015 and the executive headteacher is leading the school in her absence. Ten members of staff, including three unqualified teachers and five teaching assistants, left the school in the last year and nine new members of staff, including two qualified teachers and four teaching assistants, have replaced them.

Leadership and management

School leaders are taking effective action to ensure that safeguarding and child protection arrangements keep pupils safe. Up-to-date policies, which make reference to the most recent guidance, are in place and available to parents at the school. However, these policies are not all on the school's website.

Staff have received appropriate information about how to keep pupils safe. They have attended relevant safeguarding training covering e-safety, child sexual exploitation, radicalisation, female genital mutilation, forced marriage and the use of restraint. Consequently, they have a clear overview of safeguarding procedures and practice and they know how to act if they have concerns about a young person's welfare.

The school has a knowledgeable and appropriately trained designated safeguarding lead. She is a member of the senior leadership team and has sufficient time and resources to fulfil her responsibilities. In addition, two deputies, who are fully trained in safeguarding, are in place and the executive headteacher has also had the training to fulfil the role.

Well-organised, written records are stored securely and referrals made to the designated safeguarding lead are dealt with effectively. School leaders work closely with the local authority to ensure that all pupils are safe, referrals are made promptly and protocols for those children missing education are followed.

The site is secure and risk assessments are in place for the physical environment, individual pupils and school activities. All staff have also had training to make sure that they are fully aware of how to reduce risks when they are away from the school.

Appropriate steps have been taken to ensure that staff are recruited safely and procedures are in place for managing allegations or concerns about adults or other pupils. Staff are also encouraged to raise concerns about any unsafe or poor safeguarding practice that they become aware of.

All staff have been trained to use positive physical intervention techniques but, as behaviour has improved over time, the need to use reasonable force has declined. Pupils who spoke to me indicated that restraint was only used to protect a pupil or other pupils close by and that it happened infrequently now. On the rare occasions where the use of restraint has caused concern to staff, pupils or parents, school leaders have worked closely with members of the trust and the local authority to thoroughly review the incident, following agreed procedures.

The governor with responsibility for safeguarding has a clear understanding of her role. She has attended relevant training and has further training scheduled. As a result, she is able to hold senior leaders to close account for ensuring that pupils are safe.

Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe as part of the curriculum. They told me that they have been taught about how to stay safe when using the internet and they have had input from a police officer on alcohol and drug abuse. They know about healthy eating and that they understand how to stay safe in practical subjects. However, despite the fact that there are a number of posters around the school highlighting British values, the pupils were unclear about what they were.

Pupils told me that there was less bullying now than there used to be and they were confident that if it did occur other pupils would challenge it and, if it was reported to staff, that they would deal with it quickly and effectively.

Staff and pupils told me that behaviour has improved and all staff and almost all pupils and parents who responded to the school survey agreed that the children were safe in school. The parent with whom I spoke confirmed that behaviour had improved, and that pupils were safe, and evidence seen during the inspection supported this point of view.

Attendance has improved since the predecessor school was inspected and staff have effective systems to respond to absence immediately. Persistent absence has declined and improved attendance is rewarded. The introduction of a breakfast club, which gives pupils a very positive start to the school day, has made a significant contribution to this improvement.

Year 11 pupils who attend college for one day a week are well supported. They are accompanied initially and then visited regularly. Their independence is encouraged and this has helped the vast majority of school leavers to secure and maintain a place at college.

The attendance of these pupils, and the pupils who attend full-time alternative provision at Archway Academy, is monitored closely. Staff at the school are notified immediately if pupils are absent or if they miss a session. The school and parents also receive regular reports on the progress the pupils are making.

School leaders have taken effective action to address the areas for improvement in the predecessor school's last Ofsted report. Students attend more regularly and teachers and teaching assistants have taken part in a series of joint training sessions in order to improve practice. There is now a clear sense of one well-trained team pulling in the same direction for the benefit of the pupils.

As a result of this, and other action taken by school leaders, the quality of teaching has improved and the progress pupils make is faster than it was at the time of the last inspection.

Leaders and managers have high expectations of staff and pupils and they lead by example. They have a clear understanding of the quality of education in the school and use this to improve key aspects of the school's work. The positive relationships that exist between leaders, staff and pupils also support the progress of all pupils in the school.

External support

The school has received a range of effective support from the Advance Trust and Worcestershire local authority.

The Executive Principal of the trust visits the school on a regular basis and holds leaders to close account over pupil outcomes, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and personal development, behaviour and welfare. She has also taken action to ensure that pupils are safe in the school. For example, the Executive Principal initiated a thorough investigation into the use of positive physical intervention on behalf of the trust, which made some clear recommendations to school leaders about further actions. These recommendations have informed a post-serious incident action plan and the Executive Principal will monitor progress against this plan over time.

The trust has also provided other support, such as producing effective policies for all the trust schools, introducing a system to assess, monitor and develop the social and emotional development of pupils, facilitating the sharing of best practice across the schools and providing support for the governing body.

To complement the work of the trust, the school still uses a number of local authority services. For example, a local authority officer has produced a useful evaluation of the quality of marking and feedback, school governors have received training and services such as salaries, buildings and estates and human resources are provided by the local authority.

Officers from the local authority take action to ensure that pupils are safe in the school. For example, during this visit the transport used to bring the pupils to school was checked and the local authority has also worked closely with school leaders, governors and the trust to investigate the use of reasonable force in the school.

Priorities for further improvement

- Fully implement the post-serious incident action plan.
- Improve the website so that it includes current policies and up-to-date information about the school.
- Take action to develop pupils' understanding of fundamental British values.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Worcestershire local authority, 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

Simon Mosley

Her Majesty's Inspector