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Mr Idrish Patel
Headteacher
Bolton Muslim Girls School
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Dear Mr Patel

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Bolton Muslim Girls School

Following my visit to your school on 21–22 June 2016, 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 inspected the single central record of checks made on staff employed at the school, along with other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. I met with the headteacher, various members of the senior leadership team, including pastoral leads and the special educational needs coordinator, the e-safety officer, 40 pupils representing all year groups, the chair of the governing body, the designated governor for safeguarding and a representative of the local authority.

The documents I reviewed included the school safeguarding and anti-bullying policies, risk assessments, the local authority safeguarding audit, the school safeguarding action plan, individual case studies, a survey of pupils' views, minutes of the governing body, safeguarding training records, an inquest report, the school's safeguarding and child protection summary, behaviour and bullying incident records, the school improvement plan, schemes of work and teaching resources. It was not possible to gather evidence from Ofsted's online survey, Parent view, because there were too few responses.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

Bolton Muslim Girls School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school with 597 pupils. All are from minority ethnic backgrounds, the majority being of Indian and Pakistani heritage. Most speak English as an additional language. Very few are at the early stages of English language acquisition. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above the national average. The proportions included in the register of special educational needs or supported by an education and health care plan are below the national average. The school population is stable with few pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the usual times. The school has few difficulties recruiting and retaining staff, although some redundancies and changes of role have taken place in recent months resulting from changes to the pastoral system.

Main findings

Leaders, including governors, take seriously their responsibility to keep pupils safe. This is evident in their commissioning of the local authority to carry out an audit of safeguarding and their swift response to its findings. A safeguarding and child protection action plan has been produced with clear objectives, resource implications and strategies to evaluate impact. The overall school improvement plan is less clear. It is unclear how the impact of improvements in safeguarding and pupils' personal development will be measured.

Leaders' and governors' constant determination to keep pupils safe is seen in numerous ways. For example, plans are in place to improve induction training for new staff. Furthermore, a review of the school uniform is under way to ensure the girls can be easily identified as members of the school and can be seen more clearly by drivers on dark mornings and evenings. Visitors to the school are provided with safeguarding leaflets and differently coloured lanyards so that staff and pupils can identify any visitor without a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate. Evacuation procedures have been updated and the school has appointed an e-safety officer to audit and develop current e-safety practices in the school, provide training and monitor progress.

Minutes of governing body meetings show safeguarding to be a high priority; governors effectively hold leaders to account. All staff have attended the minimum expected safeguarding training. Records are up to date, and those staff who may have missed a training session receive the training at a later date. Senior staff and governors have received appropriate training in safer recruitment practices and records show a number have attended training on a range of safeguarding issues including female genital mutilation, tackling homophobia and transphobia, preventing extremism and radicalisation, British values and fire safety.

Displays in the corridors and toilets support safeguarding by providing the telephone numbers of support groups such as 'ChildLine'. They also inform pupils who they should go to in school if they have any safeguarding concerns. Posters about female genital mutilation with a telephone helpline are on display outside the girls' toilets and there are posters about whistleblowing in staff toilets. A safeguarding noticeboard has been introduced containing anti-bullying and e-safety information. Further to this, and in response to concerns raised that too many girls do not report bullying to staff, the school has launched an online anti-bullying package which allows pupils to post their concerns about bullying anonymously and provide evidence of cyber bullying. Staff have access to the information and are able to trace the person who posted the evidence and follow up incidents. Cyber bullying has been a particular concern for staff and pupils. The school has made a recent change to disciplinary procedures so that any pupil found to have perpetrated such an offence is now automatically excluded from school. School records show few incidents of reported bullying and no recent reports of cyber bullying.

The school has also made efforts to include safeguarding information and messages in the curriculum. Through a range of subjects, such as science, religious studies, life skills and living Islam, pupils learn about substance abuse, sex and relationships education, puberty, female genital mutilation, child sexual exploitation, trafficking, grooming, domestic abuse and forced marriage. Form-time, enrichment days and assemblies have included topics such as British values, mental health, eating disorders, tolerance, respect and tackling racism. Pupils have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online and when using social media. They value the opportunities they are given to learn about safeguarding issues across a range of subjects. However, many expressed the view that they would like to learn more about personal safety issues and relationships beyond what they need to answer examination questions.

Leaders are not complacent. They recognise that while much has been put in place to improve safeguarding, the benefit of these changes is not understood by all pupils. Recent changes to pastoral arrangements, for example, are not understood by all pupils.

External support

The school has sought and received effective support from the local authority. The undertaking of a safeguarding audit has helped the school focus its priorities. Staff attend local authority safeguarding training. The local authority school improvement partner attends meetings of the governing body and continues to support the school in making improvements in this area.

Priorities for further improvement

Leaders and governors should:

- ensure that action planning to improve pupils' personal development and welfare focuses clearly on safeguarding outcomes

- further develop work in the curriculum to address issues of prejudice and discrimination, name-calling and bullying
- ensure that any safeguarding concerns highlighted in pupil surveys are responded to swiftly and effectively
- improve communications between staff and pupils, particularly with regard to the availability of pastoral support.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for Bolton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Janet Palmer
Her Majesty's Inspector