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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Ann Andrew
Headteacher
High Park School
Thorn Lane
Heaton
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD9 6RY

Dear Mrs Andrew

No formal designation monitoring inspection of High Park School

Following my visit to your school on 15 September 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 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, other senior leaders, the chair of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I visited classrooms with senior leaders and met with parents and a group of teachers.

I also reviewed a wide range of other documents relating to pupils' learning and therapy programmes, including risk assessments and training records. I considered the 37 responses recorded on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

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

Safeguarding is not effective.

Context

High Park is a specialist school for pupils aged 3 to 19 with communication and interaction difficulties. Almost all pupils have a diagnosis of autism and have severe learning difficulties. Many have additional complex needs. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.

There are currently 100 pupils on the school's roll. Just under half are from White British backgrounds. A slightly smaller proportion are from Asian British backgrounds, mainly Pakistani. A very small number of pupils are from other ethnic backgrounds. Approximately one third of pupils are supported through the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority).

High Park School was placed in special measures following the inspection that took place in January 2016. Safeguarding was judged to be ineffective and, as a result, the effectiveness of leadership and management was judged to be inadequate.

Inspection findings

Governors have not ensured that the school's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements. Crucially, leaders and governors have not checked whether the actions taken since the last inspection, including those taken in response to an external review of safeguarding, have been effective. Governors, in particular, have a weak understanding of the effectiveness of the school's current safeguarding arrangements. For example, while checks on the suitability of staff to work with children and young people are now in place, the school's record of the required checks did not meet statutory requirements at the start of the inspection. Minutes of governing body meetings show that governors have failed to hold senior leaders robustly to account for tackling the critically important weaknesses identified at the school's last inspection.

Teachers and other adults are knowledgeable about safeguarding and understand why children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are more vulnerable. Pupils' safety and well-being are promoted positively and proactively throughout daily activities. For example, pupils' use of computers and the internet is well supervised and pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe when online. Importantly, the school's strong emphasis on building trusting relationships between pupils and adults, combined with the effective development of their communication skills, helps pupils to develop the confidence they need to communicate and interact safely with other people.

The school's safeguarding policy has recently been updated in response to new guidance from the Department for Education. Teachers say that they value the safeguarding training and clear guidance they receive from senior leaders. Crucially, however, governors are not knowledgeable enough about the recent changes to statutory guidance and the governing body's new responsibilities.

Pupils' individual needs are identified and assessed carefully through effective and well-coordinated multidisciplinary work which involves, for example, speech and language therapists and occupational therapists. Learning and therapy programmes have clear learning and care aims which are routinely discussed within class teams and with parents and carers. Teachers and other adults are well trained and risk assessments for class-based activities are in place to safeguard pupils. The quality of learning and care programmes is monitored closely by senior leaders and, over time, pupils make step-by-step progress towards the aims and targets identified in their individual plans. Records of the progress pupils make, however, are not always clear or detailed enough. This aspect of recording should be strengthened and records should be shared with parents and carers regularly.

External support

An external review of the school's safeguarding arrangements was commissioned following the school's last inspection. However, the recommendations from this review have not been fully implemented within the timescales identified in the local authority's statement of action. The local authority has not done enough to tackle the weaknesses in the leadership and management of safeguarding since the last inspection. As a result, the failings in governance, in particular, have persisted.

Priorities for further improvement

- Urgent action must be taken to strengthen the leadership and management of safeguarding. Specifically, governors must ensure that the school's safeguarding arrangements are effective and the school complies with all statutory requirements.
- Senior leaders should ensure that records of pupils' progress towards agreed learning and care aims are regularly updated and shared with parents and carers.

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

Yours sincerely

Nick Whittaker
Her Majesty's Inspector