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Mr Rob Arrowsmith
Acting Principal
North West Specialist Inclusive Learning Centre (SILC)
Tongue Lane
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Leeds
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Dear Mr Arrowsmith

No formal designation monitoring inspection of North West Specialist Inclusive Learning Centre (SILC)

Following my visit with Marian Thomas, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Judith James, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 13 October 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

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements and met with you, the executive principal, other senior leaders, the chair of the governing body and representatives of the local authority. Inspectors visited classrooms on the Penny Field School, Green Meadows School and Allerton High School sites with senior leaders and met with groups of teachers.

Inspectors also reviewed a wide range of other documents relating to pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, and their learning and progress, including health care plans, risk assessments and training records. Inspectors

considered the 19 responses recorded on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

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

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Context

North West SILC is a multi-site special school for pupils aged three to 19 who have a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are three specialist sites: Penny Field School, Green Meadows Primary and Green Meadows Secondary and Post 16. In addition, there are four mainstream sites: Allerton High School, Benton Park School, Brudenell Primary School and Rawdon St Peter's Primary School.

There are currently 170 pupils on the school's roll. All have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Just under one third of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and approximately half 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).

North West SILC was placed in special measures following the inspection that took place in May 2016. The school's safeguarding arrangements were judged to be ineffective and all aspects of the school's work were judged to be inadequate.

Inspection findings

The executive principal and newly formed team of senior leaders have worked purposefully and with determination to tackle the profound weaknesses in the school's safeguarding arrangements in the weeks since their appointment. Systems are strengthening and teachers' practice is improving. However, despite this recent improvement, the arrangements for safeguarding remain ineffective. Much more needs to be done to ensure that systems to help and protect pupils are robust and there is a strong and embedded culture of promoting their safety and well-being.

The school's record of checks on the suitability of staff to work with children and young people remains incomplete. A new system for recording all pre-employment checks is in place. This does not, however, include the required check on whether an individual is disqualified under the Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations, 2009. Although these checks are routinely carried out, they are not recorded accurately or evidenced appropriately. There are, in addition, gaps in the recording of other statutory checks and in the evidence retained on personnel files, for example the documents used to verify a candidate's identity and the person's right to work in the United Kingdom.

As a result of recent training and regular updates, teachers and other adults are more knowledgeable about how to help and protect pupils. The senior leader with responsibility for safeguarding has up-to-date training and there is a suitably trained lead person for safeguarding on each of the school's sites. Crucially, however, these arrangements are new and senior leaders must ensure that all staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and are equally effective in promoting children's and young people's safety and welfare.

Records show that incidents involving pupils and concerns about their safety and welfare are reported and recorded in a more timely way. Staff told inspectors that safeguarding is being given a high priority and reported greater confidence in the actions taken by senior leaders. However, practice across the school's sites remains inconsistent. Some incidents and concerns are not reported or recorded and some records, especially those relating to the use of restrictive physical interventions, are insufficiently clear or detailed. Importantly, senior leaders do not use the information in these records to work out how to better support pupils and, as a consequence, keep them safe and well.

Care plans provide detailed information about pupils' individual needs and the help and support they need to keep healthy and well. Teachers and other adults know how to help and support pupils because they have regular training from specialist nurses and other health professionals. The school's training records, however, are not accurate or up to date and, as a result, senior leaders cannot be confident that all staff have the knowledge and skills they need to meet each child's or young person's needs. This important weakness must be tackled immediately.

External support

The local authority acted quickly and decisively to strengthen leadership and management at North West SILC. An executive principal and additional senior leaders were appointed and an application to replace the governing body with an interim executive board (IEB) was submitted to the Department for Education. Importantly, the local authority commissioned an external audit of the school's safeguarding arrangements and has provided additional training for the senior and middle leaders with responsibility for safeguarding.

The school's improvement advisers have a clear view of the effectiveness of the actions taken to strengthen safeguarding at North West SILC. They are keeping a close eye on the impact of the school's action plan on children's and young people's learning, development, safety and well-being. As a result, the school's leaders know exactly what is still to be done and are better placed to tackle the remaining weaknesses in the school's safeguarding arrangements.

Priorities for further improvement

Senior leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all checks on the suitability of staff to work with children and young people are completed and the school's record of these checks meets statutory requirements
- all staff understand their duties and responsibilities for safeguarding pupils and are effective in promoting their safety and welfare
- all incidents and concerns are recorded in a timely way and all records are clear, detailed and used by senior leaders to improve the help and support provided for pupils
- records of staff training are up to date and all staff have the knowledge and skills they need to meet each pupil's needs.

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

Yours sincerely

Nick Whittaker
Her Majesty's Inspector