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Angela Eden
Interim headteacher
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Dear Mrs Eden

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Middleton Church of England Primary Academy

Following my visit to your school on 7 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, aspects of leadership and management in the school (including governance), and the behaviour and welfare of pupils at the school.

During the summer term, Ofsted was made aware of concerns regarding the safeguarding systems, processes and policies in place and whether these were effective enough to keep pupils safe. Questions were also raised regarding pupils' behaviour, and the effectiveness of leadership and management.

Evidence

I scrutinised the single central record of pre-recruitment checks on the suitability of staff to work with children. I also scrutinised other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. I carried out a tour of the school with you, spoke to some pupils in classrooms and briefly observed the lunchtime provision. I met the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, and the academy group executive principal of the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust (DNEAT). I also met the coordinator for special educational needs and the staff

team. I looked at any records and documents relating to pupil behaviour and well-being. I reviewed the school's policies on child protection and safeguarding, pupil behaviour, inclusion, special educational needs and/or disabilities, and anti-bullying. There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to be taken into account. However, I spoke to a number of parents during the day of the inspection.

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

Safeguarding is not effective.

Context

Middleton Primary Academy is a smaller than average-sized primary school providing education for 83 pupils aged between four and 11 years. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils (eligible for support through the pupil premium grant) is higher than the national average. The number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is also above the national average. The predecessor school was judged as satisfactory at its most recent inspection in February 2012 prior to converting to become a DNEAT academy in March 2015.

Since the previous inspection:

In the four years since the previous inspection, the numerous staff changes, most notably in the leadership of the school, have contributed to the school's instability. In September 2015 you took up post as executive headteacher of your own school, Fritcham Primary School, and of Middleton, at the request of the diocese. The initial arrangement was in place for one academic year. Both schools' governing bodies decided not to continue with this partnership in July 2015. You subsequently retired in July 2016 but have returned on a temporary basis to support Middleton until a substantive headteacher is appointed.

At the beginning of this academic year, a whole new teaching staff started at the school. There is a new head of school, three new teachers (two permanent and one temporary), and a part-time special educational needs coordinator. A newly recruited teacher will replace the temporary teacher after the October 2016 half term break. Despite difficulties in recruiting staff, you have been very choosy about appointing teachers who are right for the school. You have been honest to candidates about the challenges the school faces. During the recruitment process you have tested out their resilience and their potential to be successful. DNEAT has supported this process by approaching staff they know to be effective, to ensure that new teachers with the appropriate skills and experience have been selected to join the school.

During the inspection you were candid about the 'entrenched behaviours' that dominate the ethos and culture that have existed within the school. The profile of

the school has changed over the last few years. Historically, the school has not adapted well enough to meet the needs of all pupils and the behaviours have become a part of the school's culture of low expectations and negative responses. You and the head of school are determined that this will be changed and a start has been made to achieving this. However, there is a lot of hard work required to ensure that the expectations of staff, governors, pupils and parents are transformed so that provision is strengthened by mutual trust, loyalty and strong commitment. Your aim is for all to work positively together to secure rapid improvement and a transformation of the school's purpose.

Inspection findings

Safeguarding

You are the designated safeguarding lead officer and have undertaken appropriate training. The new head of school is due to participate in this training this month and will then support you in the designated lead role. All staff, including non-teaching staff, have received up-to-date child protection training and they are clear about what to do if they have a concern about a pupil. Training is planned to continue over a number of weeks to further secure staff knowledge and understanding of all aspects of safeguarding.

At the time of this inspection the single central record of pre-recruitment checks on staff did not fully meet statutory requirements. Some employment checks have not been carried out. This has not been picked up by leaders, including governors. While the inspection was taking place, the academy group executive principal commissioned a member of their team to attend the school during the afternoon to work with school leaders on improving the single central record. There is also some immediate work being carried out to tighten up the personnel paperwork in place. However, the management and monitoring of the single central register is not rigorous enough to ensure that administrative staff are held accountable for their role in undertaking statutory checks on staff.

So far this academic year there has not been any reason to make a referral to external agencies such as children's social care services. Previously completed records that exist are weak. The head of school, since starting in his role, has collated the paperwork and it is now in one place. However, the quality of the record-keeping is not sufficiently detailed or rigorous. It is unclear from these records as to what actions have been taken, what follow-up is required and whether these actions have been carried out. This paperwork to support safeguarding is not sufficiently meticulous to be confident that leaders know that the needs of all vulnerable pupils are met.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Many pupils' behaviour and attitudes towards school are not good enough. Staff report that some pupils are disrespectful and continually question the instructions and guidance they are given. Pupils are too often unkind to each other and this results in inappropriate responses towards one another. The school uses a system of internal exclusion for pupils whose behaviour is poor in lessons. This means that a small number of pupils work outside of their classrooms with adult supervision and support. Equally, some pupils make inappropriate choices such as getting up and walking out of the classroom. Some wander around the school, while staff follow them to ensure their safety. As a result, support staff are not always able to help pupils who require support with their work and learning time is lost for all pupils.

You are aware of what the issues are and have started to implement strategies that will support pupils to make the right choices. For example, the activities that you have implemented during lunchtimes mean that behaviour during this time is a more positive experience for pupils. You acknowledge that effective behaviour management strategies are in their early stages of implementation and development. However, these activities are not accessible to all pupils, only those who have been identified as requiring additional support for challenging behaviour. This is a cause of frustration for many parents who perceive this policy as unfair to their own children.

You consider that initial accurate assessment of need is a priority, so that provision can be planned carefully to meet the needs of all pupils. There are now more detailed assessments beginning to be carried out to ascertain the individual needs of pupils. The newly appointed special educational needs coordinator is working hard to complete this work. She is ensuring that appropriate referrals can be made to obtain support, and that all pupils receive their rightful entitlement.

You rightly discussed concerns with DNEAT regarding the behaviour of some pupils. An assessment from a consultant with behaviour expertise was carried out and appropriate recommendations made. You and your new staff team are starting to implement the suggestions. You have all heightened the expectations and begun with a 'zero tolerance' stance on poor behaviour. There are signs that some pupils are developing more positive attitudes. During the inspection, some pupils who regularly display challenging behaviour proudly brought work to show you. However, this has only been happening over a short period of time and not long enough to evaluate what difference the changes are making and what further strategies are required.

There is some evidence that pupils are beginning to trust adults in the school and as a result they are more confident in sharing how they feel, and consider it safer to do so. For example, school leaders were able to demonstrate that some pupils with

very challenging behaviours are beginning to show an improvement in how they deal with conflict. Some are now more willing to discuss their emotions calmly rather than reacting aggressively. However, this work is still in its infancy and is not yet being role-modelled across the whole school.

Leadership and management

Since beginning at Middleton Primary Academy, you have accurately evaluated what the school requires. While you acknowledge that there is a lot of work to do, you are using the opportunity of having new staff on board to revisit the school's behaviour policy and review the school's vision.

You have reconsidered the staffing structure within the school to ensure that all staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities. This is making sure that all new staff know what the expectations are and more established staff are aware that these are higher than before, and are non-negotiable. You are starting to give staff more training opportunities to help them carry out their roles more successfully. For example, all staff participated in behaviour management training and the head of school meets support staff every week to provide informal training according to their requirements.

Since you started at the school you have secured the school site to tighten up health and safety procedures. You have also considered the uses of the school environment and been proactive in identifying and developing safe places for pupils to have 'time out'; for example, the 'pebbles room'. This is being furnished to provide a nurturing place that pupils can go to have quiet, calm time if they are feeling angry, anxious or worried. Consequently, pupils can start to use this as a strategy to take themselves away from situations that may lead to their poor behaviour escalating. In addition to this, you have been working on improving the resources that all pupils can enjoy. For example, a new library and dedicated information and communication technology (ICT) area is now in place. This is resulting in better facilities for pupils and also the opportunity for pupils to develop respect and pride in their school.

The local governing body, under the guidance of a chair who joined in September 2015, is now beginning to understand what governors should be monitoring. However, while recent training is improving governors' awareness about their roles, and the strengths and weaknesses in the school, in the past they have not challenged leaders rigorously enough over safeguarding checks and school improvement.

While there are concerns identified in this inspection that require immediate attention, leaders are aware of what needs to be done and are working determinedly to take action. New leaders and teachers acknowledge, and are realistic about, the vast amount of work to do in order to make sure that pupils

learn well and behave appropriately. However, you and the head of school are being very clear about heightened expectations and are determined to secure improvements rapidly.

External support

Support from DNEAT has improved recently because the action plans for the school are based on a more accurate identification of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, previous monitoring reports of the school's work were unhelpful because they were over-generous in evaluating the school's effectiveness. Action taken has not secured rapid enough improvement.

During this academic year, DNEAT is brokering more external support for the school. This includes work with effective local schools to share good practice, mentoring for new leaders and teachers, and intervention from other agencies to provide bespoke help that the school specifically requires.

Priorities for further improvement

Leaders must:

- Ensure that all new systems and procedures for child protection are formalised, implemented fully, and used effectively, by:
 - holding all staff accountable for their role in both safeguarding and implementing positive behaviour management strategies
 - making sure that any concerns are logged meticulously, so that it is clear what action and monitoring has been carried out to follow up the concerns
 - ensuring that the governing body's systems and procedures for monitoring and evaluating the new child protection systems, behaviour records and the single central record of checks on the suitability of staff to work with children are rigorous so that governors can challenge and support leaders more effectively over the safeguarding of pupils at the school.
- Implement effective, appropriately detailed behaviour records so that they are able to analyse the number and nature of incidents, and consequently monitor and evaluate the impact of the school behaviour policy.
- Make sure that the system for recording referrals to external agencies and monitoring the follow-up action are reviewed to ensure that the processes are rigorous.
- Communicate explicitly to parents how the school manages behaviour and ensure that they fully understand the work the school is doing.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Fielding
Her Majesty's Inspector