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15 May 2017

Mr Simon Abeledo  
Headteacher  
Rush Green Primary School  
Dagenham Road  
Rush Green  
Romford  
Essex  
RM7 0RL

Dear Mr Abeledo

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Rush Green Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 25–26 April 2017, 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 (including governance).

### **Evidence**

I scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. I held meetings with you, senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I also met formally and informally with groups of pupils and staff, including the designated safeguarding lead.

Pupils' behaviour was observed during lessons, in the playground and as they

moved around the school site. I spoke to parents informally before and after school. The 22 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and two letters from parents were also considered. I scrutinised the school's records of behaviour, including logs of bullying and prejudicial behaviour. Records of leaders' investigations of behaviour incidents were also reviewed, including those carried out under the complaints policy. I considered documents relating to health and safety, including a health and safety audit, risk assessments and arrangements for pupils' first-aid and medical needs. The school's current attendance information and written records of the work of the governing body were also evaluated.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

### **Context**

Rush Green is larger than the average-sized primary school. There are currently 857 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and Black or Black British African backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average, as is the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than that found in other schools nationally.

Since the previous inspection, the senior leadership team has been restructured and one senior leader has left the school. There are currently three deputy headteachers who were appointed to their roles before the previous inspection. The governing body has also been formally reconstituted following the amalgamation of the infant and junior schools in September 2013.

### **Inspection findings**

Leaders foster a culture in which staff are clear that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility. They understand that no issues are too small to mention. Leaders provide clear guidance and regular training so that staff are alert to signs that a pupil may be vulnerable to abuse. Staff report that 'safeguarding is an issue that is continually discussed'. They say that this helps them to keep the different aspects of safeguarding 'fresh in their minds so they always know what to look out for'. This includes signs that a pupil may be at risk of female genital mutilation, gang involvement or abuse which can occur online. Staff are fully aware of their responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty to protect pupils from radicalisation.

Leaders ensure that arrangements for reporting safeguarding concerns are well managed across the large school site. School records show that staff are vigilant

and report concerns promptly using the agreed school procedures. Leaders identify accurately when pupils need additional support. They work sensitively with families to 'unpick' the reasons why a pupil may be at risk of harm. Where necessary, leaders involve external agencies promptly and follow up referrals tenaciously. They ask challenging questions to make sure that actions are in the best interests of the pupil. Effective partnerships with 'Early Help' and health services contribute well to the promotion of pupils' emotional, physical and mental well-being. On some occasions, record-keeping does not fully reflect all the actions leaders take to support vulnerable pupils. Overall, this has not undermined leaders' work to safeguard pupils. However, leaders agree that record-keeping needs strengthening so that it details all the support pupils receive and the reasons for this.

Leaders carry out all the necessary checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children, including checks on the governing body, supply teachers and contract staff. Where necessary, staff fulfil their responsibility to report any concerns regarding inappropriate conduct from adults working in the school. Leaders, including governors, take concerns seriously and investigate any issues fully. Advice from the local authority's designated officer is sought and acted on appropriately.

Leaders, including governors, ensure that the large school site is safe and secure. External health and safety reviews help leaders to identify where further action is necessary. Leaders address recommendations quickly. Arrangements for meeting pupils' medical and first-aid needs are managed effectively across the school, including in the early years. As a result, pupils feel well cared for. They say that staff always take good care of them if they are feeling unwell or have an accident.

Pupils feel safe in school. They are clear about how the school promotes their welfare, for example through suitable fences and regular fire drills. Pupils report that there is always an adult available to 'help them be happy'. They understand different ways they can ask for help. For example, pupils said they know they can contact a children's safeguarding charity if they are worried about their safety. The curriculum supports pupils to take responsibility for their own welfare with increasing confidence. Pupils learn how to cross the road safely and use the internet sensibly. They know what to do if they are worried by something they see online. The majority of parents think that their child is safe in school.

Leaders, staff and pupils have high expectations for behaviour. This is reflected in the school's calm, orderly atmosphere. Pupils typically move around the school sensibly, showing respect for each other and adults. Visits to lessons show that teachers' high expectations motivate pupils to work hard and try their best. Work in mathematics and English books shows that pupils take great care and pride in their learning. As one pupil put it: 'We are putting more effort in now so we can excel.' Corridors and classrooms are tidy and well organised. Good-quality displays, including some excellent examples of pupils' writing, reinforce high expectations.

The school's approach to behaviour provides pupils with clear guidance so they

know what is expected of them. Leaders review this approach regularly to ensure that it is effective. For example, leaders recently changed the types of poor behaviour that would lead to a sanction. They also introduced a means to warn pupils that they are not behaving appropriately. As a result, pupils say the system is fair and that 'behaviour is getting better and better'. The school's own behaviour logs show a significant reduction in incidents over the last three years. Pupils also reported that incidents of poor behaviour are rare. The vast majority of parents whom I spoke to during the inspection agree that behaviour is good. Nevertheless, some parents who responded to Parent View are concerned about pupils' behaviour. Although the school's records show that leaders are quick to tackle poor behaviour, in some cases it is not always clear whether parents have been informed of the school's action. This may contribute to some parents feeling that the school does not address poor behaviour as well as it should.

The previous inspection identified pupils' behaviour in the playground as an area for improvement. Consequently, the school has invested in new playground equipment and introduced 'zones' so pupils use the outside space safely. Most pupils are clear about how to play sensibly, for example by taking turns on the climbing frame. Leaders have also increased the number of staff 'on duty' at playtimes. As a result, most pupils feel that the playground is well supervised and that everyone gets on well. As one pupil put it: 'Staff see everything and they sort things out.' Nevertheless, a small number of older pupils expressed concerns about 'fighting' at lunchtimes. Inspection evidence shows that fighting is rare and dealt with quickly. However, there are occasions where some older pupils play roughly together. Staff do not always give these pupils clear expectations on how to manage their behaviour and play in a sensible manner. Leaders recognise that some staff require further guidance to help them apply the behaviour policy consistently in the playground.

Responses to Parent View show that a significant group of parents are not confident that the school deals well with bullying. Leaders are taking effective action to address this by conducting a thorough review of the school's anti-bullying approach. They have sought pupils' views through a survey and analysed responses to ensure that any concerns are followed up quickly. Parents have also been invited to give their views so that leaders can understand what the school can do differently. Together with leaders, pupils have rewritten the school's anti-bullying policy with the motto, 'Stand up! Speak up! Stamp out bullying for good!' Further actions are planned, including increasing the number of midday supervisors and introducing 'worry boxes' to help pupils raise concerns.

Events such as activities during anti-bullying week help pupils understand different types of bullying, including that which occurs online. The vast majority of pupils said that bullying is rare and that any issues are resolved quickly. Some pupils said that

they had experienced bullying in the past. However, they feel that staff are taking it more seriously and, as a result, bullying has reduced. Pupils said that racist bullying or language also happen rarely, describing it as 'a one in a million thing'. School records confirm that bullying is rare and that leaders investigate issues thoroughly. However, as with behaviour incidents, there are occasions where it is unclear if parents have been kept fully up to date with all the actions taken by the school.

The governors review safeguarding arrangements regularly during governing body meetings and school visits. For example, the governors carry out an annual audit to strengthen procedures where necessary. Records of meetings show that governors have the necessary information to challenge leaders on how they are improving pupils' safety and behaviour. Responses on Parent View show that some parents disagree that the school deals effectively with concerns. Governors have subsequently revised the complaints policy. They are clear about their responsibilities in responding to parents who are dissatisfied with action taken by the school. Inspection evidence shows that governors apply the new complaints policy consistently.

Until recently, leaders, including governors, have given insufficient emphasis to improving pupils' attendance. In 2016, pupils' absence rates, including persistent absenteeism, were too high. You have now identified attendance as a priority for improvement. Leaders are tackling cases of persistent absence with greater urgency than in the past. They are quick to spot when pupils' absence may indicate a risk to their welfare. Where necessary, leaders make referrals to the appropriate external agency to make sure that these pupils are safe. Current school information indicates that absence rates, including persistent absenteeism, are reducing. Governors are planning to meet leaders on a half-termly basis to check that improvements are sustained. However, leaders know that further work is needed to ensure that all pupils attend school as regularly as they should, particularly boys and disadvantaged pupils.

Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well catered for. Leaders work constructively with parents and external agencies to ensure that pupils' needs are assessed thoroughly so that they get bespoke additional support. For example, pupils have access to counselling and take part in social skills groups to help them develop confidence and learn to play well with their peers.

## **External support**

The school improvement partner from the local authority meets leaders regularly to

help them evaluate the standard of education the school provides. The governors have also commissioned support from a neighbouring local authority. This is sharpening their evaluation of the school's work and increasing their challenge to leaders, for example during the annual governors' review week.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Leaders and governors should ensure that:
  - pupils, and in particular boys and those eligible for free school meals, attend school as regularly as they should
  - older pupils receive clear guidance from staff to help them manage their behaviour sensibly at lunchtimes
  - communication with parents is strengthened so that they are fully aware of all the school's work to promote high standards of behaviour and tackle bullying.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Murphy-Dutton  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**