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Mrs Caroline L'Estrange
Headteacher
St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Aided Infant School
Sawyers Hall Lane
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Dear Mrs L'Estrange

No formal designation monitoring inspection of St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Aided Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 17 May 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. Ofsted was made aware of concerns regarding the school's safeguarding systems, including those relating to pupils' personal development, behaviour and wellbeing. Consequently, this inspection focused on the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements and the impact of leaders' work to improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare.

Evidence

The inspector scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, a group of pupils, parents, staff, representatives of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. The inspector accompanied the site manager on a tour of the school grounds to check security and safety.

During the inspection, the inspector evaluated a wide range of key documents such as governors' minutes, attendance records and local authority audits of safeguarding arrangements. Curriculum information relating to pupils' personal,

social and health education was considered in order to evaluate the effectiveness of leaders' work in promoting pupils' welfare.

Having considered the evidence I am of the opinion that, at this time, safeguarding is effective.

Context

St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Voluntary Aided Infant School currently provides education for 225 pupils aged from four to seven years old. The school population includes lower than average proportions of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. However, the proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is above the national average.

At the previous full inspection, in 2009, the school was awarded an outstanding judgement and became exempt from routine inspections. The same experienced headteacher leads the school and there have been few significant changes in staff.

Main Findings

Leaders have created a caring ethos supported by clear processes and procedures for ensuring that pupils are well cared for and looked after. The welfare and safeguarding of pupils are a very high priority for leaders and all staff.

Staff are suitably trained to identify any concerns they may have about pupils' well-being. They use the school's systems efficiently to log any concerns they may have, and possess the necessary skills to handle these situations effectively. You provide regular training and updates so staff are kept fully informed of any recent statutory child protection changes. The staff spoken with during the inspection communicated a culture of awareness and vigilance in promoting pupils' safety and welfare.

As the leader for safeguarding, you have the appropriate level of training required and are up to date with current statutory child protection arrangements. Staff spoken with commented on the helpful and knowledgeable advice they receive from you regarding safeguarding. Children are at the heart of the decisions you make and you ensure that, when required, you work effectively with other agencies. Although you keep child protection records safely and appropriately, you acknowledge that, at times, all the actions you have taken have not been recorded with sufficient detail to ensure a fully robust chronology of events.

Governors hold you and your staff to account effectively for the welfare of pupils. Governors are equally well trained in their responsibilities and participate in regular training opportunities. Governors ensure that safeguarding is given a high priority and is a standard item discussed at every governing body meeting. Governors

ensure that all aspects of safeguarding are considered. However, you are aware that some actions are not taken swiftly enough. For example, governors have not ensured that the website is compliant regarding statutory policies and information about how effectively the school spends additional funds on vulnerable pupils. Governors have been aware of this situation but have not yet acted. As a consequence, the website currently does not reflect the positive work of the school well enough and updates are slow to appear. Statutory policies that are out of date on the website are readily available in school. You are aware this is an area that requires rapid improvement.

The mandatory records for the recruitment of staff are kept in satisfactory order. Currently, you are updating personnel files so that they are fully in line with the local authority's expectations and training. During the inspection, some minor administrative aspects were easily corrected to ensure compliance. A large number of parents volunteer to either listen to pupils read or to accompany them on school trips. You have rightly carried out the correct level of police checks for those volunteers who are in regular contact with pupils.

Staff assess risks appropriately and robustly when organising school trips to provide for pupils' safety and well-being. Parents spoken with during the inspection stated that they are provided with comprehensive training and instructions before volunteering on a school outing. Staff implement all necessary practical safeguarding arrangements and ensure that there is the correct ratio of adults who are suitably checked to accompany the pupils during the trip.

Pupils say they feel safe and younger pupils demonstrate they are safe in school. The pupils I spoke with could identify an adult with whom they would share concerns. They all considered that any issues would be taken seriously and that adults would help them. Pupils were adamant that issues of bullying were exceptionally rare and dealt with promptly. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are cared for and supported well. You ensure that their personal welfare is a priority and provide thoughtful transition arrangements when these pupils move to the junior school to ensure that their safety and well-being is well catered for.

You are currently evaluating the curriculum and the quality of provision in subjects such as personal, social and health education (PSHE) and some pupils are trialling a new approach to learning how to keep safe, healthy and well which is proving successful. Displays around the school demonstrate that pupils are encouraged to share their ideas and views about keeping healthy and safe. For example, comments include, 'I am going to shake my fingers to calm down', and, 'I am going to eat two pieces of fruit every day'.

While pupils told me that they receive instruction regarding keeping safe when using the internet, during Internet Safety Day, you recognise that this curriculum provision could be extended further. Currently pupils are less able to explain how to

keep safe when using a range of technologies in a way that is appropriate for their age.

The well-maintained school site is safe and secure. Although you share the site with the junior school, pupils understand the rules and routines of where they can go and play. They follow these willingly and understand when it is their time to use the additional apparatus. Pupils told me that they would like more equipment at lunchtimes so they can be involved in organised games. During the inspection, pupils were suitably active, running around the playground. However, this does result in a large number of minor accidents. Again, your procedures are robust and staff are suitably trained to deal with first-aid issues, and record incidents well.

The school values and positive relationships between staff and pupils are very evident. The value of respect informs the way pupils and staff conduct themselves around the school. In classes, pupils are calm and focused on learning, demonstrating the school's ethos and values of being kind to one another. You celebrate how well pupils look after each other and much of their work can be seen on display around the school.

You place great importance on pupils attending regularly. Currently, pupils' attendance is above national averages. You have rigorous procedures in place that are followed if a pupil's attendance falls below your high expectations. School evidence shows that governors regularly scrutinise information about attendance and ask leaders pertinent questions regarding the work of staff to ensure that pupils attend regularly.

External support

You receive 'light touch' support from the local authority due to your previous Ofsted judgement. You and your staff attend regular safeguarding training and updates provided by the local authority. You receive additional support as a faith school from the Diocese of Chelmsford, which you appreciate and find useful.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that the website is kept consistently up to date and compliant with statutory guidance.
- Ensure that child protection and all safeguarding documents record all information and are robust and rigorous.
- Continue to embed a culture of safeguarding so that staff fully understand their crucial role in child protection.
- Review the lunchtime equipment so that pupils have more to occupy themselves at this time.

- Leaders review the impact of the PSHE curriculum so that children develop their personal and social skills even further.

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

Yours sincerely

Kim Hall

Her Majesty's Inspector