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6 July 2017

Mr Heath Mason
Headteacher
Brantridge School
Staplefield Place
Staplefield
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West Sussex
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Dear Mr Mason

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Brantridge School

Following my visit with Hugh Betterton, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 6 and 7 June 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 at the school.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. They met the headteacher, leaders with designated responsibility for safeguarding, governors and staff, and spoke with the chair of the Radius Trust.

Inspectors spoke to pupils in lessons, at lunchtime and around the school. A wide range of documents was reviewed including records of trips and visits, minutes of governing body meetings, and reports, including from local authority quality assurance visits.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

Brantridge is a non-maintained special school that is part of the Radius Trust. The school has 41 boys on roll, aged between six and 13 years. All pupils have social, emotional and mental health difficulties and/or autistic spectrum disorder. A number of local authorities place pupils in the school. A quarter of the pupils are residential. A separate inspection of the residential provision occurred at the same time as this inspection. The current headteacher joined the school in February 2016. The chief executive of the trust and the executive principal left in 2016 and were not replaced. The Radius Trust is in the process of transferring all of their schools, including Brantridge, to another trust.

Leaders have created a school culture that keeps pupils safe. Staff are well trained and wholly committed to fostering good relationships with pupils and keeping them safe. Leaders, governors and trust members recognise that some aspects of the school's work to keep pupils safe over time have not been as effective as they should have been, for example staff recruitment. Historic shortcomings in the trust's recruitment processes have been rectified. All staff, including those staff who are employed by agencies, have had the appropriate checks.

Pupils feel safe in school. They are proud of their school and of their personal achievements, such as when they are awarded '1,000 behaviour points'. Pupils feel that adults are there to help them, including when other pupils are unkind. Pupils have good knowledge of how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Leaders provide a range of outside visitors to talk to pupils about how to keep safe. Pupils are given good opportunities to share their feelings, worries or concerns. Staff listen and act swiftly to support pupils. Records show that pupils are happy with staff responses to their concerns. Parents who completed the school's own recent survey said they felt that pupils are safe and happy at school.

Staff and leaders' record-keeping is effective. Concerns about pupils' well-being are carefully recorded. Communication with parents and other agencies is clearly documented. Staff and leaders know pupils very well. As a result, adults are very responsive to pupils' needs when significant events outside school life have a negative impact on pupils' well-being. Pupils are well cared for, including the most vulnerable.

Leaders have improved the way that trips and visits are planned and how risk is assessed. The needs of the most vulnerable pupils are catered for well. When pupils lose self-control and do not follow staff instructions, adults respond appropriately and know what to do. As a result, pupils who take part in trips and visits are safe.

Staff know the whistleblowing policy and use it when appropriate. Allegations against members of staff are dealt with promptly and effectively. Leaders seek, welcome and act upon local authority advice.

Exclusions are recorded effectively. Historic performance information about the school, suggesting that no pupils were excluded in previous years, is not accurate. Pupils are now being excluded less frequently than earlier this academic year because their behaviour is improving. However, one recent exclusion was not managed effectively.

The school works well with local authorities. Leaders provide a rich range of information to the local authorities that place pupils at Brantridge. Local authority quality-assurance visits are welcomed by the school, and leaders use the development points to make improvements to the school's work.

Staff are trained well and know and understand how to keep pupils safe. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and respectful. Staff are supportive of the work of senior staff and readily accept advice that is offered. However, some staff feel that senior leaders could be even clearer about the consequences for poor pupil behaviour. The policies relating to behaviour management on the school's website and the new behaviour policy are not as clear as they need to be.

Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is mostly calm, and pupils are safe throughout the school day. Pupils are welcoming to visitors and demonstrate exemplary manners in some interactions with staff and visitors. Occasions when pupils lose self-control are managed very effectively.

Leaders record and analyse a wide range of information about pupils' personal development and well-being. Leaders know which pupils are thriving and which pupils are presenting sustained challenging behaviour. Staff are effectively trained to use restraint and use it as a last resort. Staff are skilled at avoiding pupil restraint because they can calm or distract pupils in a wide range of ways. When restraint is used, it is recorded in a diligent and timely manner. As a result, leaders are able to ensure that restraint is used safely and appropriately and that pupils are safe.

The school's website does not meet requirements. It does not provide parents, carers or placing authorities with important accurate information about how the school keeps pupils safe and how staff manage pupils' behaviour.

Governors' support and challenge to leaders is not as effective as it should be. Governors are not clear who is responsible for ensuring that information provided to parents on the website is up to date. Governors' oversight of safeguarding is not sharp enough. There is not enough focus on the policies and procedures that keep pupils safe, for example those relating to the 'Prevent' duty. Governors do not feel that communication between the trust and themselves is clear enough.

External support

The Radius Trust does not provide effective support and challenge to school leaders. Over time, scrutiny of the school's work to keep pupils safe has been weak. Historic staff recruitment, led by the trust, has been unsafe. Recent safeguarding reviews and reports commissioned by the trust have been helpful in highlighting what is working well and suggesting further improvement, including the need to improve the trust's recruitment processes.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that all exclusions are managed effectively.
- Provide parents and carers with accurate and up-to-date information on the school's website about how the school manages behaviour and keeps pupils safe.
- Ensure that policies are clear about how the school manages inappropriate pupil behaviour.
- Ensure that governors and the trust have better oversight of the policies and practices that keep pupils safe.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the trust and the director of children's services for West Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Cole
Her Majesty's Inspector