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21 July 2017

Miss Elizabeth Bassett  
Acting Headteacher  
Downham Feoffees Primary School  
Main Street  
Little Downham  
Ely  
Cambridgeshire  
CB6 2ST

Dear Miss Bassett

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Downham Feoffees Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 6 July 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**

I scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. I met with senior leaders, a group of governors, a representative of the local authority and a group of pupils. I also met with representatives of Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust (CMAT). You took me on a tour of the school and we briefly observed teaching and learning in three classes.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

## **Context**

The school is smaller than the averaged-sized primary school, with 205 pupils currently on roll. There is one class per year group from Reception to Year 6. Most pupils are White British and almost all speak English as their first language. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school was inspected in January 2017 and was judged to be inadequate in all areas. Safeguarding was found to be ineffective. This is the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures.

The school's substantive headteacher was absent for a time, following the previous inspection, and has since left the school. The deputy headteacher led the school in an acting capacity during the substantive headteacher's absence. The current acting headteacher joined the school in April 2017, working four days per week.

## **Main findings**

Since the previous inspection in January 2017, governors have made ensuring the effectiveness of safeguarding their main priority. You were appointed as acting headteacher with the specific remit of raising safeguarding practice to at least an acceptable level. This you have done and, although there is still room for improvement, safeguarding is now effective.

One of the weaknesses identified at the time of the previous inspection was that systems for following up concerns about children were not robust. Weaknesses were also identified in the quality of the school's records of child protection concerns. In addition, inspectors found that concerns raised by staff were not always followed up effectively and in a timely fashion.

You and the deputy headteacher have carried out a 'root and branch' review of the school's child protection systems. You have audited the files and established an up-to-date register of pupils for whom there is currently a concern on file. You have triaged each case to ensure that the most pressing issues have been identified. This means that you are very well aware of who the most vulnerable pupils are and have ensured that suitable actions have been taken to monitor them closely.

You and the deputy headteacher have reviewed each individual child protection file. Where you found gaps in information, you filled them. You ensured that every file has an accurate and up-to-date chronology, detailing concerns that have been raised and the action taken.

There is now clear evidence that you and the deputy headteacher, as the school's designated safeguarding leads, take decisive, timely and appropriate action when necessary. The school's child protection records now reflect a rigorous approach in

response to concerns that are raised.

The previous inspection also raised concerns about staff training in safeguarding issues, particularly when staff are new to the school. Training has now been provided for all staff in a range of safeguarding aspects, including the 'Prevent' duty. You ensure that new staff are given a basic level of training as soon as they join the school, with more in-depth training to follow as soon as is practicable. You keep a clear overview, showing who has attended training and when, to ensure that no members of staff are missed out.

The single central record of pre-employment checks meets statutory requirements. The record has been improved considerably. In the past, some checks were not carried out as part of the recruitment process. You and the office staff have now fully assessed the likelihood that these omissions could present a risk to children. You have strengthened the approach to recruitment so that such errors are very unlikely to happen again.

Pupils are happy at Downham Feoffees and feel that their school is a safe place to be. The atmosphere in classrooms is happy, open and encouraging. Pupils talk very positively about the school's staff and know that they can talk to any adult if they are worried about something.

Pupils have a good understanding of what bullying is and the forms that it can take. They said that they learn about bullying regularly in assemblies and in lessons. Pupils have been taught to tell if they are ever subject to bullying. Pupils have also been taught not to be a bystander and to know that they should tell an adult if they witness someone else being bullied.

Governors have been strongly involved in ensuring that the necessary improvements to safeguarding practice are made. They are deeply committed to making sure that protecting and promoting pupils' safety is given the highest priority. The governing body has appointed a safeguarding governor who liaises with leaders regularly and checks that stringent procedures and processes are being followed fully.

Although willing and proactive, governors sometimes lack the necessary knowledge to be highly effective in checking the strength of the school's safeguarding arrangements. For example, when checking the single central record, governors are reliant on the information that they receive from others, to show them how to carry out such a check. Governors do not routinely refer directly to the statutory guidance, particularly 'Keeping children safe in education', in order to be sure about precisely what they are checking for and what the requirements are.

The school's approach to risk assessment is not fully developed. In the past, it has been too focused on filling in a template rather than on the process itself. You are fully aware of this and are starting to improve the way that risks are assessed and

evaluated and, where necessary, control measures put in place.

### **External support**

Since the special measures judgement, the local authority has provided good support to the school. This has had a clear impact on improving the effectiveness of safeguarding. The local authority's adviser visits regularly and checks the school's progress in improving safeguarding at every visit.

CMAT, the trust appointed to sponsor the school when it becomes an academy in the near future, has also provided good support, despite having no current obligation to do so. For example, a member of the CMAT staff carried out a rigorous review of all of the school's safeguarding procedures, identified weaknesses and gave clear timelines for addressing them. This has been helpful in supporting the school to improve the effectiveness of its safeguarding practice.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Ensure that governors refer directly to statutory guidance about safeguarding, so that they have the necessary knowledge to be fully effective in their roles.
- Develop the school's approach to risk assessment by:
  - identifying possible risks fully
  - evaluating the likelihood, and the seriousness of the consequences, of possible risks
  - identifying suitable measures to control or reduce identified risks
  - focusing on the process itself rather than completing a template.

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

Yours sincerely

Wendy Varney

**Her Majesty's Inspector**