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17 May 2018

Mrs Alison Barden  
Roxton VA (CofE) School  
School Lane  
Roxton  
Bedford  
Bedfordshire  
MK44 3DR

Dear Mrs Barden

### **No formal designation inspection of Roxton VA (CofE) School**

Following my visit to your school on 2 May 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This 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 following the previous inspection in October 2017 when safeguarding was judged to be ineffective.

### **Evidence**

Following notification of this inspection, I held a telephone conversation with the previous interim headteacher, who has just left the school. During the inspection, I carried out a detailed scrutiny of the records of checks made when staff are recruited to ensure that they are suitable to work with children and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. Additionally, I checked the school's policies related to safeguarding. I also looked carefully at how leaders ensure that the school's safeguarding systems are effective, as this was a vital area for improvement identified in the previous inspection. I met with you, the deputy safeguarding leader, two members of the governing body, one of whom was the chair, the office manager, a representative of the local authority and the majority of the staff team. I also talked to pupils in a meeting and accessed the most recent information on Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

## **Context**

Roxton VA (CofE) Primary School is a smaller than average primary school with 84 pupils on roll including the pre-school. The majority of pupils are of White British background. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is also below the national average.

In October 2017, the school's overall effectiveness was judged to be inadequate and deemed to require significant improvement. The reason for this was due to ineffective leadership of safeguarding practices. Consequently, this inspection focused on the rigour and effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements and the impact of leaders' work to ensure that all staff understand their role in keeping children and pupils safe.

Since the previous inspection, there have been changes in leadership, including governance, at the school. Following the retirement of the headteacher in November 2017 an interim headteacher led the school until very recently. You were appointed as the new headteacher in February 2018 and started your role a day prior to this inspection taking place. The governing body has been disbanded and the local authority has put an interim executive board (IEB) in place. Governor recruitment is currently being undertaken to re-establish a governing body within the school. It is anticipated that a new, full governing body will be in place by September 2018.

There have been no other staffing changes since the previous inspection.

The Department for Education (DfE) has issued an academy order. Governors have communicated this to parents and carers.

## **Inspection findings**

Following the interim headteacher's appointment to the school in November 2017, she carried out a safeguarding audit sharing her findings with governors and the local authority. She has worked successfully and methodically to ensure that arrangements for safeguarding are more rigorous, meet statutory requirements, are fit for purpose, and that the safety and welfare of pupils are of paramount importance.

All staff have undertaken a wide range of whole-school training, including training in 'Prevent', which supports staff about how best to protect pupils from extremism and radicalisation. Staff now have a current knowledge and understanding of child

protection and are fully aware of their responsibility to safeguard pupils.

At the time of this inspection, the record of pre-recruitment checks on staff met statutory requirements. The office manager oversees this aspect and ensures that appropriate checks are made on all adults who work with children and pupils at the school, and that detailed records are kept of all staff appointments.

There are currently two designated child protection staff leaders, including yourself. There is now clear evidence to indicate that child protection issues are responded to in a timely way, and accurate, detailed records are kept to record incidents and concerns. These are now kept securely, with a good regard to confidentiality. Statutory policies are up to date and published on the school's website.

Although staff are fully trained and systems are much more rigorous than they were, from our joint scrutiny of records you are very much aware that there remains work to be done to ensure that the safeguarding culture and ethos within the school further develop to ensure that all aspects are as watertight as they can be. The interim headteacher has made rapid inroads to improve this quickly in a short time and this has successfully laid foundations upon which you can implement further improvements.

The governing body, disbanded following the previous inspection, worked under the remit of an IEB. This is now in a transition period and recruitment for new governors is underway. The current governing body undertakes its responsibilities with regard to safeguarding with rigour and a sound knowledge and understanding of national guidance. This is ensuring that governors are able to hold leaders to account and know when the systems in place are effective.

Pupils spoken to during this inspection were confidently able to explain how staff keep them safe. For example, pupils demonstrated a good knowledge of the 'red hand' system. This is a strategy used to ensure that pupils can always access adult help and support if required. Pupils recognise that adults put this system in place to keep them safe. Pupils are confident about the methods that adults use to keep them safe and firmly believe their concerns will be sorted out quickly. Pupils are particularly positive about the implementation of 'worry boxes'. Additionally, pupils spoke knowledgeably about practical safety and security aspects such as fire drills. Pupils especially appreciate the adult supervision at the bus stops so they feel safe travelling to and from school. Pupils were also able to point out the potential risks around the school and how staff take effective action to keep them safe.

Pupils were complimentary about how their curriculum learning helps them to stay safe when using the internet. Pupils knowledgeably relayed strategies they learn to remember how to stay safe when online.

There has been increased transparency in the communication that parents receive. Parents were shocked by the previous inspection findings but value the interim

headteacher's work to ensure that their children are safe. The Ofsted Parent View responses indicate that parents feel that their children are safe and well cared for at Roxton VA CofE Primary School.

As the newly appointed headteacher, you are very aware of what needs to be done and are determined to work swiftly to urgently build upon the good work undertaken by the interim headteacher. You are realistic about the amount of work still to do in order to ensure that all staff consistently carry out their role in safeguarding children and pupils. However, like the interim headteacher, you are unwavering about heightened expectations for all staff and are determined to embed improvements rapidly.

### **External support**

Since the previous inspection, the local authority has been effectively working with the school on a regular basis. Additionally, the diocese is providing appropriate support including having a representative on the current governing body.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Leaders should continue to embed a strong culture and ethos of safeguarding ensuring that all staff consistently demonstrate a thorough understanding and dissemination of their role, responsibility and accountability in child protection.
- Leaders should build upon their work to review, establish and implement safeguarding and child protection systems that are used effectively by all staff.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Fielding  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**