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19 November 2018

Mrs Susie Arnold
Executive Headteacher
Askern Spa Junior School
Sutton Road
Askern
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN6 0AQ

Dear Mrs Arnold

No formal designation inspection of Askern Spa Junior School

Following my visit with Alison Ashworth, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 7 November 2018, 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

During the visit, we scrutinised the single central record, alongside the checks made on adults working with the pupils in the school. We scrutinised other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We also met with yourself, the head of school, your consultant business manager, a group of pupils and a range of staff, parents and carers. Discussions were held with members of the governing body, including the chair and the governor linked to safeguarding. We also met with a representative from the local authority.

We evaluated external review information, your school's self-evaluation and post-Ofsted action plan, safer recruitment procedures, records of staff training, governors' minutes, risk assessments, and attendance and behaviour records. Together, we conducted a safety check of the school site and observed the behaviour of pupils during playtime, lunchtime and in lessons.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

Askern Spa Junior School was inspected in May 2018 and it was judged to require special measures, with safeguarding being judged as ineffective. Since the previous inspection, an assistant headteacher and two teachers have left the school. The local authority brokered a local leader of education as an interim headteacher to support the school's work for the summer term. In September 2018, governors appointed you as executive headteacher and secured the secondment of a head of school. Governors also secured, for part of the week, the support of an experienced consultant business manager from a neighbouring school. The school is currently going through the process of converting to become an academy.

Despite considerable staffing turbulence since the previous inspection, your appointment has benefited the school as you begin to address the decline in standards. The governing body has been strengthened further through the appointment of two experienced governors, with one of them taking responsibility for safeguarding. Governors have a wide range of skills and expertise, including in education, to provide support and challenge. As a result, they have been appropriately linked to those areas of the school identified as needing urgent improvement. The safeguarding governor provides rigorous challenge and necessary support to school staff.

You and your head of school clearly prioritised safeguarding. You have both worked hard to bring about the rapid improvements secured in this important area of the school's work. This has taken place in a very short space of time. You have very good relationships with the governing body and the local authority. As a result, you have been able to drive necessary improvements swiftly, based on a carefully considered action plan.

Following the previous inspection, you have worked swiftly with the local authority to ensure that all staff receive appropriate and up-to-date safeguarding training. As a result, in September 2018, all staff received refresher training on child protection, including training about the dangers of radicalisation. You have ensured that there are high safeguarding expectations across the whole school, for example through weekly meetings with all staff. As a result, staff are vigilant, record concerns more consistently and can clearly explain what to do if they have any concerns about any of the pupils who attend the school.

You have recently reviewed policies in the school, including the behaviour policy. Consequently, you have raised expectations of all. Pupils and staff have embraced the newly introduced system of 'golden time' rewards, and its consistent use is evident in all classrooms. As a result, the behaviour of pupils has improved and their conduct in lessons and during breaktime and lunchtime is calm, purposeful and polite.

School systems for recording incidents have been refined, and staff have received appropriate training, so that they use the systems more effectively. As a result, staff feel more confident in reporting incidents, for example when pupils report incidents of bullying and/or harassment. School records indicate a significant reduction in behaviour incidents since last year, including for bullying and harassment. Both staff and pupils reported that behaviour has vastly improved since the previous inspection. They say bullying happens on some occasions, but, when it does, staff deal with it appropriately. Pupils spoken with reported that they feel safe in the school and know how to stay safe, including when online. They also know what to do if they have any concerns, including, for example, going to the 'rainbow room'.

The support you have received from the consultant business manager has ensured that swift actions have been taken to review the single central record and all recruitment procedures. Together with your consultant business manager, you have ensured that the single central record is now regularly checked and monitored by appropriate leaders, including the safeguarding governor. There are now checking systems and clear steps in place to ensure the suitability of staff working at the school. You have both ensured that recruitment procedures follow safer recruitment guidelines, and a number of members of the governing body are trained in safer recruitment. These revised safer recruitment procedures are proving effective, as they have been followed well during the recent appointments made by the school.

Since the last inspection, and with the support of the local authority, you have taken swift actions to ensure the recording and monitoring of pupils' attendance. This is ensuring that monitoring is more effective and rigorous. You strengthened the school's attendance team with additional staff, including the support from the local authority's education welfare officer. As a result, leaders are beginning to analyse attendance information more effectively. They are able to identify patterns of absence and take appropriate actions to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. You have successfully raised the profile of attendance across the whole school and you use social media tirelessly to communicate the importance of good attendance to your community. As a result, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school declined since last year, but remains significantly above the national average. You recognise that more work is needed in this area and you are determined to continue working with families to ensure that more rapid improvements are made.

External support

The local authority has acted swiftly to appoint you as executive headteacher and a head of school to address urgently the issues identified in the previous inspection report. The local authority's learning standards and effectiveness officer has worked closely with the school leaders to ensure that work is undertaken quickly, so that safeguarding is increasingly effective. The local authority has provided effective support to the school, so that the provision of safeguarding training for staff and governors is in place. It has also completed safeguarding audits and provided

support with interim staffing. Staff from the local authority are supporting leaders and the school's attendance team, so that attendance is being monitored and analysed thoroughly.

Priorities for further improvement

- Continue to improve the attendance of all pupils and further reduce the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent.

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

Yours sincerely

Dimitris Spiliotis
Her Majesty's Inspector