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Keith Bennett
Marland School
Peters Marland
Torrington
Devon
EX38 8QQ

Dear Mr Bennett

No formal designation inspection of Marland School

Following my visit with Tonwen Empson, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 9–10 January 2019, 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 and aspects of the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school (including governance).

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. Meetings were held with the executive principal and governors, the headteachers from each school site, staff and pupils. A telephone conversation took place with the school's independent education consultant. Inspectors gathered the views of parents via telephone conversations and considered three responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.

Inspectors visited lessons with leaders across all three sites, observed pupils during breaks and spoke to them informally during lessons and other times of the school day to gauge their views on behaviour and safety. They reviewed pupils' work from a number of displays around the school and looked at a sample of writing and mathematics. A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, relating to behaviour, safety and safeguarding.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

Marland School is a special school across three sites. The Marland site is for boys and is termly residential. Two day schools, Marland Primary in Bideford, which opened in September 2018, and Marland Secondary in Barnstaple, provide co-educational education for pupils across the North Devon area. At the time of the inspection, only boys were attending, with 96 pupils on roll across the three sites. All pupils have an education, health and care plan for social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The vast majority of pupils are of a White British background.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in ensuring that safeguarding and child protection arrangements keep pupils safe

The nature of Marland School means that pupils are extremely vulnerable in a variety of ways. Strong leadership and management established a highly committed staff team. Leaders have embedded a strong culture of safety and security. This is clearly evident around the three school sites. For example, names and contact numbers of designated safeguarding leads are well positioned for instant access should the need arise. Together, leaders and staff are resolute in their determination to ensure that processes and checks to safeguard pupils are robust, thorough and checked frequently to minimise risk to pupils and to keep them safe. Staff consider the safeguarding of pupils to be the responsibility of everyone, irrespective of their role and responsibilities.

Staff receive high-quality training in all aspects of safeguarding. This includes child sexual exploitation and 'Prevent'. Leaders keep clear records showing who has attended training. This training means that staff are confident in the action to take should they have any concerns. Discussions with staff show they are clear about the key documents and policies they need to read and understand, for example 'Keeping children safe in education'.

Leaders, including governors, understand the importance of recruiting safely. The school's procedures to check the suitability of staff to work with pupils are robust. All staff are carefully vetted prior to starting employment at the school.

Pupils who spoke with the inspectors talked openly about how they feel safe in school, are well cared for and looked after. This reflects the high levels of care and guidance that staff provide. Pupils trust staff and are confident they can talk to them about their worries or concerns.

Pupils describe how 'staff don't shy away from discussing with them issues such as racism, radicalisation and extremism'. This was exemplified in key stage 4 pupils' writing about racism titled, 'the man behind the colour'.

Most parents and carers who spoke with inspectors, and the few who responded to Parent View, are confident that their children are well looked after, are safe and behave well. Parents and carers describe how the school has helped turn their

children's lives around, for example, 'children who have struggled in mainstream really flourish at the school'.

Safeguarding is carefully woven throughout the curriculum. For example, it is clear that pupils have learned about keeping themselves safe when using electrical devices such as mobile phones and computers. They know about the risks of giving out personal information such as passwords and contact details. Reminders about e-safety are displayed around the three sites, which pupils refer to when discussing internet safety.

Staff confirm how they are given significant support by leaders to maintain their own health and well-being. 'Excellent support, couldn't wish for anything better', '100% supported by leaders' and 'very well supported by leaders' are three of the positive comments made by staff to inspectors. Staff welcome the morning and evening debrief meetings. They feel able to talk openly about any concerns or anxieties and know that they will be listened to by senior leaders and 'not undermined'. Furthermore, staff highly value the opportunity to speak to professionals to maintain their health. This level of support means that staff absence is decreasing.

Behaviour policies and procedures are detailed. These policies are reviewed regularly by leaders and governors to ensure that they remain fit for purpose. During the on-site inspection, staff were seen applying the agreed behaviour strategies successfully, both to promote good behaviour and defuse potentially challenging behaviour. Staff and pupils were adamant that behaviour viewed by inspectors was 'typical'. Pupils told inspectors that staff are consistent with managing behaviour, commenting, 'What staff say is what they are going to do'. Pupils are confident that staff 'don't hold grudges' and 'never give up on us' and describe how 'staff always try their hardest for us'. This consistency in managing behaviour provides pupils with the confidence that behaviour will be tackled the same, regardless of which adult is present. Pupils comment that, 'staff do not shout at them' and are 'extremely patient with us'. Older pupils comment, 'staff always respect us even if sometimes we don't respect them'. Such strong relationships between staff and pupils helps keep pupils calm and reduce their anxious behaviours.

Analysis carried out during the inspection showed that overall behaviour incidents reduced last term, along with the number of fixed-term exclusions. Leaders work hard to ensure that pupils attend regularly. They rigorously apply the attendance policy to get pupils to school, for example, going to collect pupils from home and transporting them to school. As a result, attendance figures are above the national average.

The number of pupil restraints has reduced since the previous standard inspection. Pupils are confident that restraints are only ever used as a last resort, that staff don't like having to restrain and, 'don't do it to hurt us'.

Complaints and serious incidents involving pupils and staff are responded to quickly, and detailed records are kept. However, inspectors found that safeguarding protocols need to be embedded in the newly opened primary school.

Governors have good knowledge and understanding of the school's safeguarding and behaviour management procedures across all three sites. Detailed reports from the executive principal and headteachers provide governors with a wealth of information about the quality of education and care that pupils at Marland School receive. There is evidence of governors asking questions and holding leaders to account. However, this degree of scrutiny by governors is not well evidenced in governor minutes.

External support

Leaders, including governors, are outward-looking and eager to seek external guidance and support to make further improvements to the school. They make good use of this external support to drive forward school improvement. For example, leaders use the findings of the school improvement partner and independent education consultant to quickly implement the actions recommended during these visits.

Priorities for further improvement

- Leaders, including governors, should ensure that the effective safeguarding policy and procedures are embedded into the practice in the new site.
- Ensure that the challenge provided by leaders and governors is clearly evidenced in records.

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

Yours sincerely

Jen Southall
Her Majesty's Inspector