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24 May 2019

Mary Ellen McCarthy
Hinchley Wood Primary School
Claygate Lane
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Esher
Surrey
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Dear Mrs McCarthy

No formal designation inspection of Hinchley Wood Primary School

Following my visit to your school with Clive Dunn, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Graham Marshall, Ofsted Inspector, on 14 May 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 a wide range of other documents and policies relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. Records of executive board meetings, your headteacher reports and a report of visit from external advisers were considered. Inspectors also considered leaders' records of pupils' attendance and behaviour. They met formally with you, members of the senior leadership team, the designated safeguarding leads and groups of teachers, non-teaching staff and pupils. Inspectors also spoke informally to small groups of pupils at breaktime and lunchtime, and a number of parents and carers at the beginning of the day. The lead inspector held a meeting with the three members of the executive board, two of whom attended via telephone. A meeting was held with a representative of the local authority, and contact was made with the local authority designated officer, whose views were considered.

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

Safeguarding is effective and leaders, including those responsible for governance, have maintained standards at the school.

Context

Hinchley Wood Primary School is a large primary school with 622 pupils currently on roll. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is below the national figure. The percentage of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is well below the national average. The proportions of pupils who are from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language are below national averages.

The school was last inspected by Ofsted through a short inspection in January 2017, when it was judged to be good. Most teachers and non-teaching staff have been in the school for some time. However, there have been significant changes to the senior leadership team and governance recently. The headteacher left the school last year and, in her absence, the deputy headteacher acted as interim headteacher during the summer term. He too left the school at the end of the summer term. During the summer term, the local authority brokered support for the school from Lumen Learning Trust (LLT). Consequently, from September you joined the school as executive headteacher, together with the new interim headteacher. You have restructured senior and middle leadership across the school. The school business manager left the school in September 2018. In October, the governing body resigned and was replaced by an interim executive board (IEB) the following month. The IEB liaised with parents and the local community and consulted on the future academisation of the school. Last month, the school was granted an academy order from the Department for Education. The IEB is currently leading the planning to convert the school to academy status and join with Hinchley Wood School from September 2019.

Main findings

Together with the IEB and your new senior leaders, you lead a dedicated and enthusiastic staff who recognise previous strengths and weaknesses of the school and share high aspirations for your pupils. Hinchley Wood Primary offers a warm and welcoming environment where pupils feel safe and well supported by adults. Staff provide increasingly well-organised layers of care that meet the needs of individual pupils effectively. This enables pupils to benefit from the effective teaching on offer and so most make strong progress during their time at the school. All the pupils that we met during the inspection knew who they would speak to should they have any concerns. They feel confident that staff and other pupils would support them should they need any help. Information about key staff to contact if needed, both within and beyond the school, is readily available to pupils

and their parents. Pupils told inspectors that they trusted staff to deal with any issues they may need to raise.

You and your team have demonstrated considerable resilience, resolve and particularly strong leadership over the past few months. Through your open and honest self-evaluation and determined actions, you wasted no time in addressing the procedural errors and training requirements identified during the external reviews of safeguarding and governance conducted during the summer term. You have sought and embraced a range of appropriate external advice and support where necessary. The latest reports of visits from the IEB, feedback from the local authority and inspectors' judgements all concur that you have ensured that all recommendations made during these external reviews have been actioned. You and your team at LLT have upgraded the school's internal systems and delivered a range of bespoke additional training. This has ensured that leaders, governors and staff are better informed about safeguarding, behaviour and welfare issues, and procedures have been transformed. More needs to be done to embed these improvements and ensure that safeguarding and pupils' welfare are better incorporated into the school's policies and plans.

The new IEB wasted no time before conducting thorough reviews of the school's policies and practices and holding leaders more stringently to account for their work to keep pupils safe than was done in the past. A member of the IEB acts as the designated safeguarding governor and works alongside school leaders to check the quality of safeguarding arrangements in the school. Safeguarding is a regular feature of IEB meetings. The IEB has challenged leaders to refine and enhance provision for pupils and to sharpen safeguarding systems. They have been helped in this process by expert support from the administration team at Hinchley Wood School. As a result, leaders have transformed the school's safeguarding culture, with improved policies, more staff training and better record-keeping. Consequently, staff have developed a greater confidence in their understanding of their part in safeguarding children. They value the much-improved channels of communication and there is a shared culture of vigilance across the school.

New leaders have ensured that all appropriate safeguarding and qualifications checks are made on all staff and that accurate records are maintained. All staff, volunteers and governors receive regular, helpful training which meets requirements and is appropriate to their role in the school. Revised induction packages have been introduced, so better training will be given to new recruits. Leaders ensure that staff have easy access to a wide range of relevant documents and materials. As a result, staff can confidently recall what to do should they have a concern about any pupil and can describe well-rehearsed routines for seeking support from the designated safeguarding lead where appropriate. They understand their specific responsibilities relating to e-safety and reporting any suspected cases of neglect, abuse or radicalisation.

Leaders have introduced sharper strategies for monitoring the attendance,

behaviour, health and well-being of pupils. Better record-keeping allows them to recognise any patterns that occur and to analyse trends for the IEB. Staff are now supported much more effectively to refer any concerns, no matter how small, to the safeguarding leads promptly and to record them suitably. This enables safeguarding leaders to ensure prompt and personalised support is put in place to ensure that potentially vulnerable pupils are kept safe and supported well. As designated safeguarding lead, you work effectively with experts from beyond the school, providing challenge to external agencies where necessary, in order to provide timely additional support to pupils and their families where required.

You have prioritised making better use of additional funding. Your recently appointed sport premium mentor has already started to implement ambitious planning and ensure sustainability of this investment by mentoring teaching staff in the provision of sport and physical education. The school offers a variety of sporting clubs and activities which are valued by pupils and parents. Similarly, leaders have improved planning and provision for pupils with SEND. Training for staff and teaching assistants has improved their awareness of how to support pupils with SEND. Consequently, many of these pupils are beginning to make better progress than in the past. Clear systems are in place to track and monitor any vulnerable pupils.

Leaders have ensured that better planning has enabled more targeted use of the pupil premium to support disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have worked to make sure that teachers are now much more aware of who these pupils are and how to support their needs in the classroom. While overall attendance is high, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils as a group remains stubbornly below that of their peers. Your appointment of a home-school link worker has improved communication with families, and, although it is early days, this work is yielding signs of improved attendance for some disadvantaged pupils. Leaders and IEB members are aware that more work is needed to improve the attendance and achievement of this group and eliminate gaps between them and their peers.

External support

The school belongs to a local partnership of schools, enabling leaders to access and share best practice. In addition, school leaders and the IEB make good use of expertise from outside the school. Examples include using expertise from LLT to ensure that staff training is of high quality, seeking high-quality financial and administrative support from Hinchley Wood School and gaining access to legal advice when necessary. Leaders and the IEB work closely with colleagues from the local authority. As designated safeguarding lead, you regularly attend multi-agency meetings, ensure regular communication and make sure that detailed records are kept. Leaders have challenged external agencies when necessary, to ensure they receive timely responses to any questions or information required.

The level of challenge provided to the school from the local authority was suitably robust and thorough when safeguarding shortcomings were identified during the summer term. Their latest reviews confirm that safeguarding systems at the school are effective and that leadership and governance are now strong. However, communication between the local authority and the school's safeguarding leads has not always been as timely and effective as it might have been. For example, the local authority has not always given clear advice about how the school should respond to specific safeguarding issues.

Priorities for further improvement

Leaders and governors should develop a more confident and secure embedding of the school's revised safeguarding procedures by:

- refining wider school policies and plans to reflect the improved safeguarding culture
- using their analysis of provision and patterns of attendance to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils
- continuing with their plans to secure and sustain long-term leadership and management and governance.

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

Yours sincerely

Matthew Newberry

Her Majesty's Inspector