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30 July 2019

Elizabeth Keeble
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Keeble

No formal designation inspection of Vange Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit with Cindy Impey, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 10 July 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 with no notice 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, aspects of the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school (including governance), and personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils at the school.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. Additionally, inspectors checked the school's policies related to safeguarding and looked carefully at how leaders ensure that the school's safeguarding systems are effective, including those linked to radicalisation, extremism and attendance. Inspectors met with the headteacher, the school business manager, pupils, parents, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

Vange Primary and Nursery School is a smaller than average primary school with 103 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British background. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than average and is in the top 20% of all schools for the proportion of disadvantaged pupils. Similarly, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is also above the national average and in the top 20% of all schools for the proportion of pupils with SEND support.

Since the previous inspection, there has been little change to the staffing team. However, as the school continues to develop and grow, the leadership structure is being reviewed to ensure that capacity increases to be able to raise standards further. The local authority has been working closely with leaders since September 2018 because of weaker outcomes in 2018.

Inspection findings

The work leaders do to ensure that they keep pupils safe is effective. It is evident that the welfare and safeguarding of pupils are a very high priority for leaders, including governors, and all staff. The day-to-day leadership of this area is very strong. Rigorous protocols and secure practice underpin the caring ethos that has the safety and welfare of each individual pupil at its heart. When challenging situations arise, leaders have ensured that staff in school are equipped with the necessary skills to handle these effectively, so that the needs of all, including the most vulnerable pupils, are met.

Procedures to ensure that all staff have appropriate safeguarding training are thorough. There are regular training sessions, updates and catch-up events as required. Staff spoken to during the inspection spoke of a culture of awareness and vigilance where pupils' welfare and safety are actively promoted. The training that staff have received, including about how to respond to signs of extremism and radicalisation, has given them confidence to identify appropriate risk and know what procedures to employ to report their concerns.

The record of pre-recruitment checks on all staff meets statutory requirements. The school business manager maintains this well. Leaders oversee and ensure that appropriate checks are made on all adults who work with pupils at the school and that detailed records are kept of all staff appointments. Leaders also make sure that prior to starting work at the school, a thorough induction process informs new staff well so that they are fully aware of the school's systems, processes and expectations for safeguarding pupils. Additionally, staff are very clear about their responsibilities to ensure that all pupils are safe.

All matters relating to safeguarding and child protection are well developed and continue to be regularly reviewed to further improve their effectiveness. Systems for

recording and acting on concerns are fully in place. Staff are clear about the processes for listening to pupils and recording and reporting any worries. Staff know and fully understand that safeguarding and child protection matters and any concerns relating to pupils' personal development and welfare are given the highest priority in the school. As a result, decision-making and referrals for the high volume of pupils requiring help and support are timely, appropriate and recorded methodically.

During this unannounced visit, safeguarding records clearly showed leaders know pupils well and this knowledge allows them to offer the best support possible. Appropriate action has been taken and referrals are well documented. Records are kept of any meeting attended, the reasons for referral and other wider risks of relevance to the pupil's case. This information is securely stored. Consequently, the day-to-day school procedures to keep pupils safe are appropriate and staff actively promote the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils.

The school's five core values 'value, achieve, nurture, grow and enjoy' underpin the work staff do to ensure that pupils develop respect, empathy and appropriate attitudes to prepare them for their future. Pupils were keen to share their views, showed respect and were able to explain their thoughts maturely giving examples of their school experiences that help them to achieve this. For example, behaviour while playing football was becoming a challenge at lunchtimes. Pupils explained to the inspector how they had to sign a contract with the Football Association (FA) and how they develop their sporting attitudes to gain their football 'licence'. Pupils are given the opportunity to discuss their actions and behaviour, so they reflect upon what to improve so that lunchtimes are a safe and happy time for everyone.

Pupils spoken to during this inspection were able to explain how staff help to keep them safe. Pupils are confident about sharing any worries they have with all adults in school and firmly believe their concerns will be sorted out quickly. Additionally, pupils are positive and proud of their school. They demonstrate a deep-rooted respect for other people and value the way their education is preparing them for later life.

Behaviour observed throughout the inspection was positive. Both pupils and parents spoken to confirm that they believe it is, too. Leaders have reviewed the behaviour policy and regularly review the pupils' needs so that behaviour is managed effectively. For example, where there are pupils who exhibit more challenging behaviour, leaders implement a 'consistent management plan' which is reviewed regularly, in some cases daily, to ensure that all risks are appropriately identified and plans put in place to support pupils to successfully access their education. Leaders' actions and responses to the needs of pupils contribute towards behaviour being effectively managed and pupils well supported so that they are successful and, equally, do not disrupt the learning of others.

Pupils reported to inspectors that bullying is rare. Pupils understand how to keep

themselves safe and are aware of the various forms of bullying and other forms of discrimination. Pupils are tolerant of each other. They understand and appreciate differences between people, including those from different faiths and cultures. Pupils learn about a wide range of different cultures and religions. Pupils talked respectfully about the visitors from other countries they have met as part of their learning and were able to discuss their understanding about racism. They also talk about their respect for people with different faiths.

Pupils are very aware of the risks of radicalisation and can talk knowledgeably about what having 'extreme radical' views means. Leaders promote the pupils' understanding of British values and moral opinions effectively through the curriculum and their day-to-day school life.

Leaders' positive partnership working with parents is based upon mutual respect and trust. While this has extended opportunities for parents to visit the school such as for example, for social times during 'feel good Fridays', additionally, this has increasingly secured openness and transparency when sharing information. Consequently, the working partnerships between school and home are supporting pupils to be safe and well cared for. However, leaders identify that the current systems and method of working by the headteacher is not sustainable. For example, the headteacher personally undertakes much of the communication with parents and this can distract and take her away from the strategic oversight of the school's work. Currently, leaders, including governors, are reviewing the leadership structure so that responsibilities are reviewed and more appropriate, manageable ways of working can be implemented.

Leaders are very aware of the link between good attendance and effective safeguarding. Leaders are proactive in their efforts to improve pupils' attendance, particularly those who are persistently absent, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. Scrutiny of pupils' individual circumstances demonstrates the significant success of actions taken to improve the attendance of those pupils who are regularly absent from school.

Governors have a developing overview of safeguarding arrangements. All governors receive regular training on their legal duties, including that of safeguarding. This is ensuring that the governing body, with support from the local authority, is increasingly undertaking its responsibilities with regard to safeguarding with more rigour and a more in-depth knowledge and understanding. Consequently, governors are developing their ability to hold leaders to account and know when the systems in place are effective. Governors are aware that they need to sharpen their own checks and implement actions that will ensure that their strategic understanding is secure.

Leaders and governors understand the importance of safeguarding. Evidence shows that this continues to be leaders' absolute priority. Leaders are working determinedly to develop their work and the impact it has on pupils further,

particularly with regard to child protection.

External support

The local authority has intervened appropriately and in a timely way to both support and challenge leaders, particularly the governors, to ensure that standards in the school improve. The local authority representative has established a positive working relationship with leaders and supports leaders' work to improve the quality of teaching and learning. This has contributed towards improving pupils' achievements in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school.

Leaders understand that further guidance, support and challenge from the local authority will support them to develop and improve the school.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that the delegation of leadership responsibilities when working with parents is more widely allocated.
- Sharpen the governing body's procedures for strategic monitoring and evaluation enabling governors to challenge and support leaders further.
- Continue to focus on improving the attendance of pupils, especially of those pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils so that they attend school consistently well.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Fielding
Her Majesty's Inspector