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Sharon Mather
Interim Headteacher
The Holy Family Catholic School
Spring Gardens Lane
Keighley
West Yorkshire
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Dear Ms Mather

No formal designation inspection of The Holy Family Catholic School

Following my visit with Helen Lane, Senior Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 9 October 2020, 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 wished to determine the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the school as concerns had been raised with Ofsted.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements, and met with the headteacher, groups of pupils, teaching and support staff. We also met with the designated safeguarding leader, the special educational needs coordinator, two governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a representative of the diocese.

Inspectors scrutinised records of attendance, and behaviour and bullying logs. The school's accident log and the admissions register were also reviewed.

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

Safeguarding is not effective.

Context

The Holy Family Catholic School is an average-size school. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils on roll is just above the national average. The school has additionally resourced provision for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is much higher than the national average. Recently, the headteacher and a deputy headteacher left the school. An interim headteacher took up post at the start of this academic year. At the time of the inspection, the school had three tutor groups self-isolating due to COVID-19 (coronavirus).

Main findings

Leadership capacity is weak. Currently, there are not enough senior leaders to ensure that safeguarding systems and procedures are implemented appropriately across the school. This places pupils at risk of abuse or neglect. The newly appointed interim headteacher has a strong understanding of what needs to improve to address the shortcomings in safeguarding. She has a steely determination to do what is right for the pupils and staff at the school.

The absence of senior leaders is leading to staff becoming overstretched. Important responsibilities, such as the leadership of behaviour and attendance, have been undertaken by the interim headteacher until very recently. Furthermore, no leader has had overarching responsibility for bullying in school since at least September 2019. Leaders cannot describe the patterns and/or trends relating to bullying. Pupils spoken to during the inspection reported mixed feelings about how staff deal with bullying problems. While the number of responses was relatively low, one in four parents who completed Ofsted's inspection questionnaire, Parent View, said that their child had been bullied and that the school did not deal with the bullying quickly and effectively. The school's own records highlight that bullying is not uncommon.

Leaders are taking steps to improve the school's personal development curriculum. However, pupils rarely receive personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. Consequently, pupils do not have a strong enough understanding of the risks they may encounter in school, their locality or in life. Pupils find it difficult to articulate how to protect themselves from abuse or neglect. Furthermore, pupils' understanding of forced marriage, domestic violence, female genital mutilation, and drug trafficking known as 'county lines' is uninformed.

Pupils' behaviour varies. The school's own records highlight that too many lessons are disrupted by pupils' poor attitudes to learning. Records show that pupils sometimes disrupt lessons by shouting out, using inappropriate language or refusing to follow the teacher's instructions. Pupils report that their peers sometimes use homophobic and/or racist language. Pupils told inspectors that they choose not to report it because they lack confidence in how staff will resolve issues.

Staff and governors receive child protection and safeguarding training at the start of each academic year. However, the culture of safeguarding is not routinely promoted across the school. For example, safeguarding updates or notices in the form of emails, e-bulletins and/or newsletters are infrequent. Staff knowledge and understanding relating to the risks pupils may face in Keighley vary. Systems for recording attendance at staff safeguarding training or continuing professional development opportunities lack rigour.

Leaders make appropriate pre-recruitment checks to ensure that staff are safe to work with pupils. However, during the inspection, leaders were asked to carry out a check relating to section 128 directions which disqualify a person from holding or continuing to hold office as a governor of a maintained school, because they had not completed this check as required by statutory guidance. This was completed before the end of the inspection.

Governors are supporting the new interim headteacher to ensure that all safeguarding concerns are attended to. Governors communicate with the interim headteacher regularly. Usually, governors examine the school's safeguarding processes on site so they have first-hand experience and knowledge of their effectiveness. Governors oversee safeguarding policies and they question leaders about the safety and well-being of pupils via a range of governor committee meetings. Governors are aware of the current staffing pressures at senior leadership level and intend to work closely with the interim headteacher to help increase leadership capacity. Nevertheless, while governors have had to deal with significant staffing issues, other aspects of the school's work, such as the quality of the personal development curriculum and safeguarding across the school, have not improved as they should.

Pupils' attendance over time has been well below the national average. Additionally, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is high. So far this academic year, 14 pupils have been removed from the school's admissions register. However, there is no evidence of off-rolling. The school's systems for checking the safety of pupils who stop attending school are strong. Leaders have established clear expectations regarding attendance and pupils, parents and carers are contacted regularly during absence to ensure pupils' safety and encourage more regular attendance at school.

Leaders and governors ensure that appropriate filters and appropriate monitoring systems are in place to keep children safe when working online. Additionally, pupils learn about online grooming, password protection and how to identify and report web-based content that is not age-appropriate. However, there are some groups of pupils who have yet to cover this content in computing.

Leaders keep accurate and up-to-date pupil files that contain relevant information to help keep pupils safe. Information in child protection files is mostly thorough. This

helps safeguarding leaders to identify appropriate and timely support for pupils who need it.

Pupils receive effective support and guidance to help them identify problems and improve their own mental health and well-being. Some pupils disclosed to inspectors how the support that they had received from school staff recently had helped them through a difficult time in their life.

External support

While leaders work with colleagues from the Diocese of Leeds (RC) occasionally to improve aspects of the school's work, including the quality of education, external support is relatively thin on the ground. This compounds the staffing problems at senior leadership level.

Priorities for further improvement

Leaders and governors should ensure that they:

- increase the capacity of leadership so that the senior leaders currently in post are not overstretched and are able to focus their attention on the aspects of the school that need to improve the most, particularly safeguarding
- improve the PSHE education curriculum to enable pupils to learn about the safeguarding risks they may face and how to mitigate them
- raise the profile and improve the culture of safeguarding across the school by providing staff with regular updates and safeguarding briefings, while checking staff compliance and understanding
- protect pupils from bullying by developing a secure understanding of where and why bullying takes place, and acting swiftly to support pupils who have concerns
- improve pupils' behaviour in class and around the school, particularly those pupils who frequently use derogatory language or disrupt the learning of others
- considerably improve pupils' attendance and reduce persistent absence.

Under normal circumstances, we would treat this inspection as an inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 due to the serious concerns identified. However, because routine inspections are suspended, we will prioritise the school for a section 5 inspection when routine inspections resume.

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Elliott
Her Majesty's Inspector