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Sarah Dunn
Bradstow School
34 Dumpton Park Drive
Broadstairs
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Dear Mrs Dunn

No formal designation inspection of Bradstow School

Following my visit to your school on 24 May 2021, 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 no formal designation (NFD) inspections. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector wished to determine the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the school.

We do not give graded judgements on NFD inspections. However, if we find some evidence that overall standards may be declining, but where no serious concerns have been identified, then the next inspection will normally be a section 5 inspection and will be brought forward. If we have serious concerns, we will deem the NFD inspection to be a section 5 inspection immediately.

Evidence

I scrutinised the single central register and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. I met with the headteacher, other leaders, including the school's business and human resources managers, teaching and support staff and a group of pupils.

I assessed pupils' personal support plans, risk assessments, behaviour records and records of physical interventions. Referrals to the designated officer and the school's processes of recording incidents were scrutinised.

I toured the school site accompanied by the headteacher, visiting classrooms, therapy rooms and communal areas. During my tour of the school, I was able to talk to pupils and to teaching and support staff.

I also met with two social care regulatory inspectors, who were carrying out an aligned monitoring visit at the same time as this inspection.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

Currently, there are 62 pupils on roll. The school is registered for pupils aged between five and 19. It caters for pupils with a range of complex special educational needs and/or disabilities. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. All are placed at the school by local authorities, including the London Borough of Wandsworth, which is the school's local authority. Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Most are boys. Leadership of the school has been stable in recent years. Many staff have worked at the school over a long period of time. The school is governed by a local governing body, with the oversight of Wandsworth local authority.

Main Findings

Leaders, including those in positions of governance, take the welfare, health and safety of pupils seriously. Staff are dedicated and hard working in an environment that can be both challenging and rewarding in equal amounts. Pupils who talked to me were positive about their school. This included those who communicated with the help of a picture exchange communication system.

Leaders and staff are constantly assessing what is right for each pupil at the school. This is particularly the case for pupils whose behaviour can be very challenging if not managed carefully.

Systems and processes to assess pupils' needs and provide the appropriate support are comprehensive. A wide range of specialist staff are directly employed by the school. This includes therapists and staff who specialise in managing challenging behaviour.

Dedicated staff are also employed to manage areas such as employment and human resources, with useful oversight from specialists at Wandsworth local authority. This ensures that aspects such as the school's single central register and the recruitment and management of staff are fit for purpose.

All staff undergo a thorough initial induction process. Ordinarily, this programme lasts for three weeks, although the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic has meant changes have had to be made to some content. Nevertheless, it is clear that staff training for safeguarding and for physical interventions is comprehensive.

Induction is followed by a six-month probationary period where staff continue to develop their expertise. Once probation is finished, staff benefit from ongoing and wide-ranging professional development and refresher training. This is particularly the case for behaviour management and all aspects of safeguarding.

Safeguarding records, including referrals to the designated officer, are managed effectively by leaders. The school maintains an online programme to record safeguarding concerns. All staff are trained to use this. Senior staff responsible for safeguarding constantly monitor this.

Records of incidents, including when physical interventions are used, are comprehensive. Pupils' personal support plans, which include management of behaviour and risk, are also comprehensive. During the scrutiny of plans, I noted that some continue to include reference to 'door holding' as a strategy to deal with challenging behaviour. In the past, this was seen as preferable to physical intervention for some pupils. However, leaders recently informed staff that this practice was to stop with immediate effect. Because of this, teaching and support staff received additional training to support this move. Strategies and plans to manage pupils' behaviour were also reviewed. Consequently, leaders report that there have been no incidents of door holding to manage behaviour in the school since this change was introduced. However, leaders agreed that some personal support plans currently give conflicting guidance to staff, appearing to state that door holding is still an option, albeit in limited circumstances. Leaders agreed that these plans need revising as a matter of urgency. This will ensure that there can be no room for any doubt that this strategy is not to be used as a method of restraining pupils at any time.

External support

Leaders work collaboratively with both Wandsworth and Kent local authorities. Dual arrangements are in place regarding both Wandsworth and Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnerships, with Kent designated officer and 'front door' being the primary port of call for concerns about staff or pupils. The school is also supported by Wandsworth local authority for aspects such as governance, school improvement and finance.

Priorities for further improvement

- Leaders should review and revise the content of pupils' personal support plans immediately, so that staff have complete clarity about the strategies they can use to restrain pupils if and when this is necessary.

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

Yours sincerely

Clive Close
Her Majesty's Inspector