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9 May 2022

Rachel Mahon
Headteacher
St Mary and St Michael Primary School
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Dear Ms Mahon

No formal designation inspection of St Mary and St Michael Primary School

Following my visit with Sarah Lack and David Bryant, Ofsted Inspectors to your school on 23 and 24 March 2022, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and the time you took to discuss your school.

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 as concerns had been raised with Ofsted about the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school (including governance).

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 as a section 5 inspection immediately.

Evidence

We scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We met with you and other senior leaders, a group of staff, groups of pupils, and parents and carers at the start of the school day. We held telephone conversations with the chair of the governing body, who is also the lead governor for safeguarding, a local authority officer and a diocesan representative. We scrutinised records and documents related to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

We looked at governing body minutes, and the personal, social, health and economic education of pupils. We visited lessons and spoke to pupils at informal times during the school day.

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

Safeguarding is effective

Context

St Mary and St Michael Primary School provides education for pupils aged three to 11 years of age. At the time of this inspection, there were 434 pupils on roll. Ten of these pupils have an education, health and care plan. The school has a relatively stable pupil population.

Main Findings

Leaders and staff work well together to secure a positive safeguarding culture which is understood by pupils. Purposeful and trustful relationships between staff and pupils give pupils confidence to disclose their concerns. They feel well supported and safe. Weekly meetings are used by staff to share any concerns they have about pupils. This helps to ensure a mutual understanding and consistent approach to pupils' safeguarding and care.

Checks on the suitability of staff are made and recorded in a systematic way. Record-keeping in this regard is managed well. Information is kept securely but is accessible to leaders when they are deciding on actions to take if risks to pupils are identified. For example, when leaders are considering patterns of pupils' behaviour or absence records.

However, there is variability in how well records about parental complaints and concerns about staff are organised. All the necessary information is retained, and leaders make sure the school is routinely represented at meetings with the local authority designated officer, for example. However, records are not organised coherently, and systems are not in place to enable clear oversight by governors or other agencies including the local authority. This weakens governors' ability to hold leaders to account for safeguarding in the school.

Pupils appreciate the supervision provided by staff across the school. Pupils spoke positively about how staff tackle bullying and other poor behaviour. They understand the sanctions and rewards systems. Pupils value the discussions they have with staff about positive aspects of their well-being, support and behaviour.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn how to develop personal safety strategies; understand diversity, prejudice and discrimination; and how to deal with everyday experiences of relationships. Pupils can remember the work they have completed and how to stay safe. For example, they took part in visits to the fire

and police services to explore issues which may put them at risk such as knife crime, and drug and gang culture.

Safeguarding training for all staff is regular and attendance is recorded. Catch-up sessions are provided to ensure no staff miss out on key training. Leaders ensure that all staff are aware of the most recent changes to statutory safeguarding guidance. Staff can recall specific aspects of their training which they find invaluable when supporting pupils or identifying any risks.

Governors are supportive of leaders. The safeguarding governor visits regularly to discuss safeguarding concerns. However, there is insufficient systematic monitoring of safeguarding processes. Governors recognise that more focus could be placed on their oversight of safeguarding record-keeping including the single central record.

Separate records of poor behaviour, including the use of sexualised language, are kept by leaders. They use these records to decide on appropriate actions to take to prevent this behaviour reoccurring.

Pupils' attendance records and leaders' analysis of attendance patterns are detailed. This ensures that leaders can take action when it is discovered that a child is at risk of going missing from education. Leaders are tenacious in promoting the best attendance possible for pupils, particularly when their previous attendance has been a cause for concern.

Systems are in place to filter inappropriate content from internet services used in school, including when devices are loaned for use by pupils at home for remote education. Pupils understand online safety.

Additional support

Representatives of the local authority and diocese understand the local context of the school and know the risks that pupils may encounter. Support and challenge are in place and these external bodies can hold leaders to account. However, the lack of appropriate systems to monitor and evaluate safeguarding practice limits the impact of this external support.

Priorities for further improvement

- Leaders, including governors, should develop robust systems to check and evaluate safeguarding practices. Governors should make sure they have reliable information about safeguarding so that they are able to hold leaders to account for their work.

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

Yours sincerely

Phil Garnham
Her Majesty's Inspector