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Robin Bertrand
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Dear Mr Bertrand

No formal designation inspection of Grafham Grange School

Following my visit with Alice Roberts, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 5 and 6 July 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 behaviour and attitudes of pupils, pupils' personal development, aspects of the quality of education and the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school (including governance), 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 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 the principal and other senior school leaders. We spoke with all staff present during the inspection and provided further opportunities for staff to meet with us one-to-one. We also met with the chief executive officer of the

multi-academy trust and spoke with the chair of the local governing board. We spoke informally to pupils and staff during the inspection.

We observed behaviour during lessons and throughout the school day. We also reviewed attendance, exclusion and behaviour logs. We reviewed records of staff absence. We discussed the educational provision that pupils receive with the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). We reviewed a range of additional documents, including school improvement plans, a review of safeguarding conducted by the multi-academy trust, staff training records and risk assessments, including for fire safety.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

There are 49 pupils on roll. The school is a special school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an education and health care plan (EHCP). 56% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This is well above the national average. The school has relatively high levels of pupil mobility. Staff turnover has also been high. A new headteacher joined the school in February 2022. Two senior leaders are leaving school at the end of the summer term. At the time of the inspection, a number of teachers and support staff were absent due to suffering from COVID-19 infections. The school is a member of the Orchard Hill College and Academy Trust.

Main Findings

The new headteacher, the chief executive officer of the trust, other senior leaders and those in positions of governance, have an accurate picture of the effectiveness of the school. Collectively, they are aware of the huge amount of work that is required to ensure that the educational provision on offer at Grafham Grange School successfully meets the needs of the pupils attending. The school improvement plan identifies the areas that need to improve most rapidly.

Staff turbulence and tension have been a recent feature of the school. Staff absence has been high and morale low. The appointment of a new headteacher in February 2022 has been welcomed by the school community. Staff are unanimous in their support for his leadership and expressed 'hope' and 'optimism for a brighter future'. A new deputy headteacher and SENCo will be joining the school in September. Whilst this is positive, there is insufficient support for pupils, for example from learning support staff. This means that too many pupils are not receiving the help, identified on their EHC plans, required to access their education successfully.

Adults care about the pupils in school. This is evident, for example, in the way that staff listen to pupils' concerns and try to resolve them, look for different ways to engage pupils in meaningful activity or keep a close watch as pupils move about the school site,

particularly when it is not a movement time. Whilst caring in their approach, staff routines and responses to pupils' behaviour are highly inconsistent. There is no widely understood or agreed ethos, behaviour policy or system in place. There is no readily accessible, effective system for staff to be informed of pupils' individual behaviour needs, nor an agreed set of approaches to be implemented. These matters are recognised by leaders. A number of policies and practices relating to behaviour and behaviour management, and consequent training needs, are in development.

From time-to-time, pupils' behaviour towards one another or towards staff is concerning. These behaviours include older or more dominant pupils enticing others to behave badly, and verbal and/or physical aggression towards peers or staff. Verbal aggression, and commonplace conversation, includes the frequent use of sexist, homophobic and racist language. As one member of staff reported, 'This would not be a positive environment for any pupil who was gay.' Over time, a significant proportion of staff have not felt confident to challenge the use of derogatory language or aggressive behaviour. Almost all staff now express having confidence in leaders to support them when needed. The reporting, recording and tracking of behaviour incidents is inconsistent. Therefore, records are not a useful tool for oversight, analysis or improvement. New systems are in the process of being implemented.

Leaders are developing a new and ambitious personal, social and health education curriculum (PSHE). Leaders intend that this curriculum will be carefully tailored to meet the needs of the pupil community and will enable pupils to learn more about positive relationships, managing risk and leading healthy lives. Leaders consider that this curriculum will play a key part in turning their vision and aspirations into reality and will provide much-needed support for pupils' personal development. Leaders state that the implementation of this curriculum from September 2022 is high priority. No suitable PSHE provision is currently in place.

A number of pupils attend school very poorly or not at all. In such cases work to reintegrate pupils or to access and engage with suitable alternative provision is slow. Furthermore, there is a lack of consideration about what is offered to which pupils, when and how and an accompanying lack of rigour of oversight and impact. More widely, attendance is too low. Whilst first-day calling is in place, there is no systematic approach to addressing low attendance.

Safeguarding training, including relating to safer recruitment, is up to date. Recruitment checks are thorough, and records of recent appointments reveal appropriate checking of applicants' safeguarding knowledge. Scrutiny of individual records of pupils known to children's social care, and conversations with staff, demonstrate that the most vulnerable pupils are known well. Leaders readily engage with and seek help and advice from other agencies. Despite this, weak oversight of safeguarding and a lack of clarity about the precise responsibilities of different staff members means that senior leaders have not assured themselves, over time, that safeguarding practice consistently aligns with policy. Recent improvements have ensured that key information is shared, recorded and reviewed.

Additional support

Multi-academy trust leaders are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The chief executive officer provides a helpful 'sounding board' for the headteacher and is ensuring that necessary resources are secured. Systems for oversight and accountability are established. A recent safeguarding review enabled leaders to see which practices needed strengthening and actions have commenced. The local governing body and board of trustees understand their roles, responsibilities, and systems for sharing and communicating key information.

Priorities for further improvement

- There has been weak oversight and a lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding. This has meant that senior leaders were unaware that policy was not being consistently enacted. Following an investigation conducted by the multi-academy trust, senior leaders have now taken steps to begin to strengthen systems and practices. Leaders must continue their work to establish clarity of roles and responsibilities within the safeguarding team. Leaders must ensure that systems for oversight of safeguarding are fit for purpose.
- Special educational provision for individual pupils, as set out in their EHC plans, is not being consistently provided. This is in part due to staffing shortages, but also because school staff do not understand individual pupil's needs well enough. Consequently, pupils are not getting a good enough education to achieve the best possible outcomes. Leaders must ensure that pupils receive the special education provision set out in their EHC plans. Leaders must ensure that pupils' individual needs are well communicated and understood, that there are sufficient staff, and that staff are sufficiently knowledgeable about how to adapt educational provision for individual pupils.
- Expectations for behaviour are neither clear nor well understood by staff or pupils. There is no understood policy or approach for how poor behaviour should be managed 'in the moment', nor what the consequences for pupils should be. Some staff have the confidence to address behaviour directly with pupils, while others do not. This means that pupils experience an inconsistent response. Staff who most urgently require the leaders' support in managing behaviour do not always feel they receive it. Leaders must ensure that expectations for, and responses to, behaviour are commonly understood and consistently applied. Behaviour records must be consistently maintained so that leaders are able to analyse patterns in individual and groups of pupils' behaviours. Support and training should be provided so that staff have the skills and confidence to manage pupils' behaviour effectively.
- Too many pupils do not attend school well enough. Some do not attend school at all. While leaders work to encourage individual pupils back to school, this work is not strategic or well-coordinated. This includes when leaders arrange for pupils to attend alternative provision as an approach to improving their attendance. Leaders must

ensure that there is a clear and coordinated attendance strategy. Senior leaders must ensure that leaders at all levels, and other staff, understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance so that it is clear who should be doing what.

- The school's curriculum for PSHE does not meet statutory requirements. More widely, the school's programme for pupils' personal development is under-developed. It does not yet consider, or respond to, the specific needs of the pupils on roll at the school. It does not promote an inclusive environment that meets the needs of all pupils. Leaders must continue their work to develop the school's curriculum for PSHE and for pupils' personal development more widely.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Orchard Hill College and Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Surrey. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Hilary Macdonald
Her Majesty's Inspector