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14 July 2022

Mrs Fawzia Govender
Acting Headteacher
Little Heath School
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Romford
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Dear Mrs Govender

No formal designation inspection of Little Heath School

Following my visit with Joanna Brinkley, Ofsted inspector to your school on 13 and 14 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 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 a wide range of documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We also reviewed attendance and behaviour records, local authority reports and governors' minutes. Inspectors met with the acting headteacher, senior staff, members of the governing body, representatives of

the local authority including the local authority designated officer, groups of staff, pupils and parents and carers. Inspectors also considered replies to Ofsted Parent View.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

Little Heath is a special school for pupils aged 11 to 19 years old. You became the acting headteacher in September 2021 after the previous headteacher left at the end of the last school year.

All pupils at the school have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). Pupils have diagnoses of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and a wide range of associated difficulties. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals and/or who speak English as an additional language are both above the national average.

The school roll is rising. As a result, additional accommodation has been added to the school site to help support the rise in pupil numbers.

Main Findings

Leaders and staff place a strong emphasis on safeguarding as part of their daily work. Leaders make sure staff receive lots of training about safeguarding. There is regular dialogue between leaders and staff about pupils and their needs. Staff know the signs to look out for that could suggest a pupil needs support or could be at risk of harm. This includes for pupils who may not be able to verbally communicate for themselves. Staff share any concerns with leaders. Leaders are quick to follow these up. They will often seek guidance from other professionals when making decisions about how to move forward. Leaders have high expectations for staff conduct. They make sure staff are aware of these expectations as they go about their work. They also make sure that all the required checks are undertaken before adults start working at the school.

Leaders and staff know pupils and their families well. They also know the sources of support that are available to parents should they need it. Leaders reach out quickly to ensure the early help that families might need is provided. Parents told inspectors they feel well supported by staff at the school.

Overall, leaders' decision-making in relation to safeguarding focuses on the best interests of pupils and keeping them safe. That said, sometimes record-keeping is not consistently robust across all aspects of the school's safeguarding processes and procedures.

Leaders have high expectations for behaviour. The 'calm room' that was previously available has been closed for use since the beginning of this academic year. Under the new leadership of the acting headteacher more emphasis is put on positive behaviour management. Staff

benefit from regular training and updates on how to help pupils with their behaviour. Leaders make sure staff, including those new to the school, know pupils' needs. This includes behaviour information, such as pupils' 'triggers' and 'warning signs'. Staff are given clear strategies so that they know what to do to support each pupil and to keep things calm. This prevents any small situation from building into something more serious. Parents are confident that their child's behaviour is dealt with calmly and kindly.

Classrooms are calm and orderly. Pupils have well established routines that help them to manage day to day school life, including break and lunchtimes. Leaders have recently introduced 'critical communication cards'. These are visual cues that staff use to further support pupils in managing behaviour and/or moving from one learning activity to another.

Staff treat pupils with dignity and respect. Leaders are clear that any physical intervention (positive handling) is a last resort. Staff have clear guidance and training on its use. They know what is acceptable and what is not. A review of school records shows that leaders make sure that any use of physical intervention is carefully recorded and communicated to parents. The number of physical interventions has steadily decreased. They are now rare. Leaders analyse incidents and report to the governing body on behaviour, including physical intervention, termly.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe and happy at school. They say that staff will help them if they have any concerns. Pupils said that bullying is not accepted at the school and if it happened staff would deal with it straight away. Parents feel that the school keeps their children safe and happy. They also said that if they had any concerns about the school, leaders would deal with them quickly.

Leaders make sure that pupils learn how to stay safe and manage risk through the curriculum. There is a programme for each year group. Pupils learn about topics such as consent, touch and online safety. Staff adapt content and activities to meet the needs of different pupils. Staff are alert to how pupils interact with each other. They undertake any follow up work that is needed with pupils. This includes one-to-one sessions to help pupils manage relationships and/or their behaviour. Leaders are alert to the importance of mental health and well-being. This includes for staff as well as pupils. Leaders are making continued improvements to their approach to mental health, for example through the work of the recently appointed mental health first aider.

Leaders manage attendance well. They take action to support families and follow up on any absences to make sure pupils are safe. Pupils who have medical conditions are also well supported. Staff receive regular information and training so that they can help pupils to manage their medical needs.

Leaders use each pupil's EHC plan to coordinate any therapies that are needed. The speech and language therapists support staff well, including training on ASD and non-verbal communication. Their work helps staff to communicate more effectively with pupils, including around routines and behaviour. Leaders are continuing to expand the therapy provision, for example with the appointment of their own occupational therapist for the next

academic year. Leaders are also developing new 'provision maps' to more effectively coordinate provision, including therapies. This work is well underway.

The governing body receives a wide range of information about safeguarding, including accidents, behaviour incidents and referrals. There is a relatively newly appointed safeguarding governor who has experience in safeguarding and pastoral care. Governors have a secure understanding of most aspects of the school's safeguarding work. However, they would benefit from additional training so they can sharpen their challenge to leaders further.

Additional support

The school is effectively supported by the local authority. This includes reviews of targeted aspects of the school's safeguarding arrangements. This has helped leaders to pinpoint where improvements are needed. A specialist adviser in special educational needs and/or disabilities is also working with the school regularly.

Priorities for further improvement

- Leaders should ensure that their record-keeping is robust and thorough across all aspects of their safeguarding procedures and processes.
- Governors should arrange further training on how they can challenge leaders more effectively about their work to keep pupils safe.

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

Yours sincerely

Sam Hainey
Her Majesty's Inspector