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Helen McCormack
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs McCormack

Urgent inspection of Kings Meadow School

Following my visit with Anne Maingay, His Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 22 November 2022, I write on behalf of His 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 urgent inspections. The inspection was carried out because His Majesty's Chief Inspector wished to determine the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the school as concerns had been raised with Ofsted.

We do not give graded judgements on urgent 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 graded inspection, which will be carried out under section 5 of the Act and be brought forward. If we have serious concerns, we will deem the urgent inspection as a graded inspection immediately.

Evidence

We met with you, other senior leaders and groups of staff. I also spoke to a representative of the local authority on the telephone.

We visited lessons, spoke to pupils, observed the school routines and scrutinised a range of documents and school records related to safeguarding, attendance and behaviour. This included a scrutiny of the school's single central record and a review of child protection records. We looked at planning leaders had provided for the personal, social, health and

economic education curriculum. We also scrutinised a selection of pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans and talked to leaders about the provision for these pupils.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Main Findings

Leaders have ensured that pupils feel safe at the school. They have provided high-quality safeguarding training and updates for all staff. Leaders are quick to act when they have a concern about pupils' welfare, involving other agencies when needed. They have appropriate procedures in place to manage any allegations about adults.

The school has a strong safeguarding culture. Staff understand their responsibility to use their knowledge of pupils to identify any concerns about their welfare. They know to report any such concerns immediately. The strong relationships staff have with pupils create a safe environment for pupils to share any worries or concerns they may have.

Pupils learn about how to stay safe, including when online. All pupils with whom inspectors met said that they feel safe.

Leaders stated that there have been historic difficulties in ensuring that the school had adequate numbers of staff. This was particularly the case when staffing levels were affected by absences related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Inspectors were assured during their visit that the current ratio of staff to pupils is adequate to ensure the safety of pupils. There is no indication that pupils' needs are not met due to low staff numbers. Some staff feel that it has become harder to meet the more complex needs of pupils that have recently joined the school. They are concerned that some experienced staff have left the school and that the current staff arrangements are putting extra work and pressure on them.

Leaders have identified certain aspects of the school's provision to further develop. They know the current curriculum is not tailored carefully enough to meet all the varied needs of all pupils. Leaders have started to re-design the curriculum into three specific pathways to more effectively support pupils at different levels of engagement with education. However, they have not ensured that they have a strategic overview of all the pupils' needs as outlined in their EHC plans.

Additional support

The school is in the process of joining a multi-academy trust (MAT). Leaders from the MAT have provided extra capacity for leadership at the school as well as administrative support. They have been proactive in this provision even though the school is not yet part of the trust. This has given school leaders confidence that when they join the trust they

will benefit from access to a larger staff resource. The local authority has provided regular advice and support which have helped to identify some key priorities for improvement around the curriculum. The extra leadership capacity provided by the trust has allowed some early work to be completed on the redevelopment of the curriculum. Leaders have identified the need for more external support from therapists and have secured extra therapy time in the school for pupils. They have also identified where there are shortcomings in their strategic overview of individual provision for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Priorities for further improvement

- Leaders have not ensured that they have a clear overview of individual pupils' SEND provision. They do not have an accurate view of the specific short-term targets that pupils should be working towards. Leaders need to ensure that pupils, parents and teachers understand the small steps of learning that pupils should achieve to help them build towards the end targets in their EHC plans.
- Leaders have only very recently started to address the issues with the curriculum that they have identified. Pupils experience an acceptable standard of education but do not yet benefit from a clearly designed curriculum pathway that is best suited to their individual needs. Leaders need to ensure that all teachers are fully resourced to provide a curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils at the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Dave Gilkerson
His Majesty's Inspector