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7 September 2023

Elizabeth Hallam
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hallam

Urgent inspection of Queniborough Church of England Primary School

Following my visit with Deborah Mosley, Senior His Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 10 and 11 July 2023, I write on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. You were not present when we attended the school and, instead, we spoke with the acting headteacher. I appreciate the help they gave us and the time they took to discuss the 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. There were also concerns about the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school, including governance, the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and the management of pupils' behaviour. The inspection was carried out without notice.

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 scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We met with the acting headteacher and other senior

leaders, and with a group of governors, including the acting chair. We spoke with pupils from three different year groups, as well as with pupils, informally, during social times. We met with two groups of staff, including teaching and support staff. We observed pupils during social times and on arrival at school. We spoke with some parents and carers at the end of the school day. We spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority and with the director of education for the Diocese of Leicester.

We reviewed a range of documentation, including a variety of school policies and the school's improvement plan. We considered information about pupils' behaviour and attendance, as well as arrangements to support pupils with SEND. We also took note of the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

The headteacher was absent during the inspection.

The acting senior leadership team has only been in post for a short period of time. The deputy headteacher has recently taken on the role of acting headteacher. Two other senior leaders were appointed as acting deputy headteachers at the same time. The acting chair of the governing body is also a recent appointment. A new governor with experience of governance was appointed on the second day of the on-site inspection. This governor has now taken over as chair of the governing body.

Main Findings

Safeguarding leaders are knowledgeable. They have completed recent training to ensure that they understand their statutory responsibilities. This training has included guidance on radicalisation and extremism, and safer recruitment. Further training is planned to cover child-on-child abuse and how to manage allegations. All staff completed safeguarding training at the start of the academic year. Leaders use weekly briefings with staff to revisit key messages from this training and to check staff knowledge. For example, leaders have reminded staff about the importance of reporting any low-level concerns they may have, however small. Staff have reviewed the school's whistle-blowing policy recently. They know how to raise an allegation about the behaviour of an adult towards a pupil.

Procedures to recruit new staff members are followed closely. Leaders ensure that all the necessary checks are completed prior to an adult starting to work at the school. Records of these checks are comprehensive and up to date.

A recent external audit of safeguarding identified several weaknesses in the school's practices and procedures. Leaders have taken swift action to bring about improvements.

However, while safeguarding is effective, there is more work to do to ensure that the arrangements are robust.

There are inconsistencies in the quality of pupils' safeguarding records. When staff report a concern about a pupil, they do not always make it clear exactly what the concern is, or who is involved. Leaders do not always record what they have done in response to the concerns raised. The records of some pupils are disorganised. Leaders are in the process of reviewing pupils' safeguarding records to ensure that each one is well ordered and complete. Leaders have updated the 'amber' record form used by staff to report safeguarding concerns. They have provided guidance so that staff know the specific information they should include when completing these forms. Leaders keep a record of their responses to each concern on the form. They check each other's actions to ensure that nothing gets missed. These changes to record-keeping are only recent and need time to embed so that they form part of the typical routine.

Leaders know the pupils and their families well. They understand the pupils who are particularly vulnerable and may be at risk of potential harm. Leaders provide staff with additional guidance about how to keep these pupils safe. A small number of these pupils have plans in place to ensure that staff provide them with consistent support. However, these plans are not reviewed, updated and shared with those who need to know often enough. Leaders are in the process of tightening these procedures to ensure that the plans remain relevant. When necessary, leaders seek extra help to keep pupils safe. Previously, leaders have waited too long to follow up when an external organisation has not acted promptly in response to a referral. The most recent records indicate that leaders now act more quickly to chase up any delays.

The school has an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere. Most pupils enjoy coming and attend well. They say they feel happy and safe. Most parents agree that this is the case. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. They understand how to look after their mental health and how to stay safe in the local community. Pupils know who they can go to if they have a problem or are worried. They say that most of their peers are kind to each other. Pupils understand what constitutes bullying. Most say it happens rarely, but that staff deal with it when it does. Pupils appreciate the support of their peers who act as anti-bullying ambassadors. Pupils know how they should behave, and most meet these expectations. At playtime, they collaborate and mix well. A small number of pupils benefit from the close support of well-trained staff to help them regulate their behaviour. Pupils are understanding and accommodating of the needs of these pupils.

There are clear systems in place to identify pupils with SEND. Leaders devise appropriate plans to support these pupils and seek external advice when necessary. Teachers are well trained to support the different needs of pupils with SEND. They use 'My passport to learning' books to track the progress each of these pupils makes against their individual targets. Leaders monitor the provision for pupils with SEND closely. They involve the parents of pupils with SEND in termly reviews, ensuring that parents can share their views about the provision for their child. Many parents of children with SEND are positive about

the school's support for their child. However, some of these parents are frustrated that their child does not get the help they need.

Until very recently, staff have not felt well supported in their roles. They have been reluctant to share their views or concerns because they have been fearful of negative consequences. Under the direction of the acting senior leadership team, this culture is changing. Staff are confident that these leaders will listen to their ideas and opinions and respond appropriately.

Leaders have not always worked together effectively to share important information about pupils with each other, with staff or with parents. Leaders have lacked clarity about their roles and responsibilities. Acting senior leaders have reviewed their responsibilities to confirm who has oversight of each aspect of the school. They have recently started to meet each week, giving them an opportunity to support each other and share valuable information.

Governors are not knowledgeable enough about their roles and their statutory responsibilities. Their oversight of safeguarding arrangements is weak. They do not follow appropriate procedures when they receive complaints so that any issues are resolved quickly. Governors do not seek prompt guidance from external professionals. They are not sufficiently alert or responsive to issues brought to their attention.

Governors are committed to supporting the school and the local community. However, until very recently, they have been too trusting. They have accepted information provided to them by leaders with few questions. They have been too slow to make connections between different pieces of evidence that, together, may raise concerns about the quality of the provision. A newly appointed, experienced chair of governors should help to address these issues.

Additional support

The school is preparing to join a multi-academy trust in autumn 2023. Leaders from this trust are supporting the school's acting senior leadership team, which has recently taken on new responsibilities. A recent review of safeguarding arrangements by representatives of this trust has helped these leaders to improve some safeguarding practices and procedures. A trust review of the provision for pupils with SEND is due to take place at the start of the next academic year.

Representatives from the diocese and the local authority have provided senior leaders and trustees with useful guidance to help them carry out their roles.

Priorities for further improvement

- Those responsible for governance do not hold leaders to account effectively. They accept what leaders tell them, with limited verification or assurance. They do not routinely challenge weaknesses in the provision. They do not have an accurate view of

all aspects of leaders' work. Those responsible for governance should ensure that they have the skills and knowledge necessary to provide appropriate challenge and support to leaders. They should hold leaders closely to account for all aspects of their work.

- There has not always been a culture of openness among staff and leaders. Staff have not always had the freedom or confidence to share their views, knowing they will be taken seriously and responded to appropriately. Leaders should develop an open culture, where all staff feel valued and respected.
- Leaders have not always worked effectively with each other, with staff or with parents to share important information about pupils, particularly the most vulnerable. Staff are not always well informed about the needs of these pupils. Some parents of pupils with SEND are not confident that their children are supported appropriately. Leaders need to ensure that important information about pupils is updated and shared with others in a timely manner so that these pupils, particularly the most vulnerable, get the help they need.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the director of education for the Diocese of Leicester, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Leicestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Tordoff
His Majesty's Inspector