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Julie Barron
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Barron

Urgent inspection of St Berteline's CofE Primary School

Following my visit with David Deane, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 14 and 15 December 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, leadership and management (including governance) and pupils' behaviour and attitudes 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 scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We met with you and other leaders. We held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff, different groups of pupils, parents and carers and a representative from the local authority. We also spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. We observed pupils at work and at play by visiting classrooms, watching their arrival into the school building in the morning and observing

their behaviour during breaktimes and lunchtimes. We reviewed the curriculum for pupils' personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and the provision for pupils' relationships and health education. We took account of the views shared by parents via Ofsted Parent View.

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

Safeguarding is effective

Main Findings

The systems for keeping pupils safe from harm are effective. There is a positive culture of safeguarding within the school that is based on warm and caring relationships, up-to-date training and a collective understanding that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Staff understand their role in keeping pupils safe. They are alert to any changes in pupils' behaviour, or physical appearance, which might indicate that pupils are suffering from harm. The most recent safeguarding training means that all staff and governors are well informed about the variety of risks that could have a negative impact on pupils' welfare, including peer-on-peer abuse and harmful sexual behaviours. Staff share and escalate concerns about individual pupils appropriately. This is so that you and other leaders can secure the timely help and support that vulnerable pupils and their families may need. When necessary, you continue to lobby for this support if it is not forthcoming, or you seek other solutions. For example, you commission a school counsellor to support pupils' mental and emotional health.

You and the governors have recently improved the recording of safeguarding concerns. Even so, some weaknesses remain. At times, these records do not contain sufficient detail, nor are they linked closely enough to the records about pupils' poor behaviour, including bullying. This hinders your ability, and that of governors, to gain a comprehensive overview of concerns and issues with ease and speed. There is the potential to miss minor isolated incidents, recorded in different forms, that together could lead to a more serious concern.

Governors are kept abreast of safeguarding matters through their meetings, visits to school and the reports that they receive. They ensure that the school's policies meet statutory requirements. Following a recent incident at the school, they have been proactive in reviewing some of their systems, especially around record-keeping. Still, governors' oversight of behaviour and safeguarding is not as sharp as it could be. On occasions, they do not ask sufficiently probing questions or carry out their checks on leaders' work with sufficient rigour.

Without exception, the different groups of pupils who spoke with inspectors, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), said that they feel safe at school. They have absolute trust in the staff. Pupils have been helped to understand the importance of sharing their worries. They know the side-effects of keeping concerns to

themselves. The convincing examples that pupils shared with us demonstrate that they are confident that staff will deal with any concerns effectively and sensitively. School records show that staff and leaders deal with incidents of bullying efficiently.

Helping pupils to keep themselves safe and healthy is a cornerstone of the PSHE and relationships and health education curriculums. From an early age, children in the Reception class learn about friendship and respecting the personal space and bodies of others. This builds over time, so that by the end of Year 6, pupils gain a wealth of knowledge about healthy relationships, sexual consent and how to protect themselves from unwanted attention and harmful sexual behaviour. Pupils particularly enjoy the Year 5 residential visit which arms them with the strategies to deal with some of the risks that they may face in their day-to-day lives. Following any incidents of unkindness, or other safeguarding issues, teachers often add extra PSHE sessions into the daily timetable to ensure that pupils are better informed of the potential impact of their actions. For example, older pupils have spent additional time considering the effect of their words on others when they share their opinions via technology.

The PSHE curriculum consists of many carefully chosen programmes to ensure that pupils are ready for life in modern Britain. Nonetheless, the curriculum itself is not as cohesive as it should be. It does not provide enough guidance to teachers about what must be taught and when this should happen. This makes it too easy for essential subject content to be missed across a year group or as pupils move from class to class.

Pupils are full of praise for their school. They are very happy and exceptionally proud to belong to its community. They behave very well from the start to the end of the day. They enter the building in a calm manner, follow routines and settle down to their work without any fuss or attempts to distract themselves or others. Despite the very cold weather, and the fact they had not been able to take a break outdoors for a number of days, their behaviour did not falter during the inspection. Those pupils who find managing their own behaviour a challenge are supported well through a range of successful strategies. This means that pupils calm down quickly and do not lose valuable learning time. Pupils attend school regularly. Very few pupils are frequently absent from school.

Pupils believe that the behaviour of others is good most of the time. They recognise that everyone makes mistakes from time to time, but they are equally willing to forgive and forget. Pupils appreciate the differences between people. They are slow to criticise, and quick to celebrate success. The school pantomime, which included every pupil from key stage 2, epitomised pupils' respectful behaviour and positive attitudes to school life.

Additional support

You appreciate the safeguarding network meetings that are organised by the local authority. You attend these meetings on a regular basis to ensure that your knowledge is up to date and to learn from the good practice in other local schools. You have made good use of the support provided by the local authority's safeguarding leader in recent months to deal with some pressing concerns. This has led you, and the governors, to

commission a local authority officer to visit the school in the near future to support you in improving safeguarding systems further.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the system for recording and evaluating safeguarding incidents. This is so that written records are sufficiently detailed, and greater account is taken of the information that is held separately, about pupils' behaviour and bullying.
- Ensure that the PSHE curriculum identifies the essential subject knowledge that pupils must learn, and when this should be taught, so that nothing is left to chance.
- Increase the rigour of governors' oversight of safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Chester, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Halton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Jo Olsson
His Majesty's Inspector