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Dawn Webb
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Dear Ms Webb

Urgent inspection of St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School

Following my visit with Lisa Strong, His Majesty's Inspector to the school on 25 and 26 September 2024, 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 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 about the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school (including governance).

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 a wide range of other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We met with the headteacher and executive headteacher and members of the governing body, including the chair. We also met with representatives from the local authority, the Archdiocese of Southwark and groups of staff, pupils and parents and carers. We observed different parts of the school day, including pupils' arrival and dismissal, breakfast club, break and lunchtimes.

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

Arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Main findings

The school has gone through a period of instability in the last few months, for example a high number of staff left at the end of the last school year. A new headteacher and executive headteacher both started their roles at the beginning of this school year. Collectively, leaders have a strong handle on the suitability of the school's safeguarding arrangements, including aspects that need to be further strengthened. They have prioritised the right things. They have made lots of positive changes to improve many of the school's systems and processes that help to keep pupils safe. A new safeguarding policy has been developed that reflects the latest statutory guidance in relation to 'Keeping children safe in education 2024'.

The school has reviewed the use of playground spaces. The changes made include allocating staff to supervise in different 'zones' in the playground. This approach is helping staff to make sure that pupils play safely at breaktimes and lunchtimes. The procedures to manage the arrival and dismissal of pupils at the beginning and end of the school day have also been successfully reviewed.

The school has significantly improved the management of pupils' medical needs and the organisation of first aid. Staff have checked and updated pupils' medical information, including for those children who have recently started in the early years. The storing of medicines and first-aid arrangements are both well managed. Staff have detailed information on pupils' needs. They know what to do should any medical attention or first aid be required. Staff, including those who work in the canteen, are aware of pupils' allergy and dietary needs. Leaders have ensured that sufficient staff have been trained in first aid, including paediatric first aid. Leaders have also booked training for additional staff members.

Staff are feeling much more positive about the school. They feel listened to and emphasise that all the recent changes are much needed.

The school is calm and orderly. Pupils behave safely, both inside and outside of the classroom. Pupils feel safe when they are at school. They use words such as 'kind' and 'friendly' to describe it. Pupils told inspectors about some of the rules that help them to feel safe. For example, they are expected to 'walk, not run' and that they 'must be kind to one another'. Pupils are confident that any bullying would be taken seriously. They speak positively about having an adult that they could turn to should they have any worries or concerns. Pupils are confident that they would be listened to and well supported.

While parents' views reflect their worries about the number of staff who left the school last year, they are positive about the changes that are being made. Many who spoke with inspectors feel that their children are well looked after. A high proportion of those parents

who responded to Ofsted's Parent View strongly agreed that their children are happy and safe. Overall, parents are confident in the direction that the school is going in. Almost all would recommend it.

The school's approach to online safety has recently been reviewed and strengthened. The school uses appropriate filtering and monitoring processes to keep pupils safe. Staff have received appropriate training on online safety. Leaders use commercial schemes effectively to support the delivery of the safeguarding curriculum. They also make use of guest speakers who visit the school to talk to pupils, for example, about the dangers of knife crime and how to stay safe in the local area. Pupils know how to look after themselves, including when they are online.

The school's approach to managing attendance, including for vulnerable pupils, has also been strengthened. New systems are helping leaders to access and respond to attendance information more quickly. Leaders are currently working on improving the recording and analysis of behaviour information. They know that the current approach does not help them to review any trends and patterns in behaviour that might shine a light on any potential safeguarding concerns.

Leaders know that many of the school's safeguarding related policies, for example attendance and anti-bullying are out of date. These policies do not reflect the school's actual processes nor do they accurately reflect statutory advice and guidance. The school also knows that risk assessments, for example those being used for school visits, are of variable quality. Leaders are not allowing any school visits to take place until they have updated staff training and finalised their educational visits policy. The school has also reviewed how safeguarding records are being organised, for example, with the planned introduction of an electronic reporting system. A review of recent safeguarding concerns show that leaders act quickly when a concern is identified. They communicate with external agencies when required, including chasing for responses when they have not heard back from agencies quickly.

Leaders have high expectations for staff conduct. They are managing the challenges of using a high proportion of short-term agency staff effectively. They make sure that a range of safeguarding information is given to all staff. This includes details about who to report safeguarding concerns to, fire evacuation and first-aid arrangements. While staff do have an 'it could happen here' attitude, some refinements are still needed. For example, staff lack confidence in knowing how to report any concerns that they may have about the conduct of another member of staff, including the headteacher.

Pupils with additional vulnerabilities, such as those with specific social, emotional and mental health needs, are being well supported. Leaders also work with the local authority mental health schools team to support pupils, staff and parents. Leaders have identified that they need to strengthen the school's mental health provision for all pupils.

The governing body is committed to the school and wants to do its roles well. However, the governing body lacks the knowledge and skills needed to fulfil its roles as effectively

as it should, for example in being able to be confident that school policies are updated in line with the latest statutory guidance. The range of information that the governing body has been receiving from school leaders has been too limited. Consequently, it has not routinely provided enough challenge to leaders in relation to important aspects of the school's work to keep pupils safe.

Additional support

The school is supported effectively by the diocese, for example, through the appointment and support of the executive headteacher. The diocese and local authority are now focusing on supporting the governing body in helping it to carry out its roles and responsibilities more effectively.

Priorities for further improvement

- The school must ensure that the governing body accesses further training to develop its knowledge and skills so that it can robustly challenge the school about the work to keep pupils safe.
- The school must ensure that the range of safeguarding-related policies are updated, reflecting the school's effective processes and the latest statutory guidance, for example, in relation to attendance.
- The school must follow through with its plans to sharpen important aspects of its work, such as strengthening approaches to risk assessment, record-keeping and staff communication; particularly in staff knowing how to report any potential concerns about the conduct of another member of staff.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of governors and the director of education for the Archdiocese of Southwark, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Greenwich. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Sam Hainey
His Majesty's Inspector