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6 October 2017

Mr Chris Wightman
West Vale Primary School
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Dear Mr Wightman

No formal designation monitoring inspection of West Vale Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 26 September 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.

Evidence

I scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements, including the local authority audit of safeguarding and the safeguarding action plan. I met with you, the business manager, support staff, middle leaders, groups of pupils, parents, the chair of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

The number of pupils on roll is below the average for primary schools. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average. The proportion entitled to free school meals is average. The percentage receiving support for special educational needs is well below average. The percentage with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.

The school was placed in special measures following the inspection that took place in March 2017. The school's safeguarding arrangements were judged to be ineffective. The effectiveness of leadership and management and the early years provision were also judged to be inadequate. Teaching, learning and assessment, personal development, behaviour and welfare, and outcomes were judged to require improvement. You and your deputy headteacher provided some external support in the summer term. You took up your temporary post as executive headteacher in September 2017. Two teachers also joined the school this term. The school is in the process of becoming an academy.

You are leading a change in the culture of school that has enabled staff at all levels to take more responsibility for safeguarding. Precisely defined actions in the safeguarding action plan have led to specific evaluations of impact. Consequently, the school now has a secure and effective approach to safeguarding.

You led the review and updating of safeguarding policies and procedures effectively. Staff worked carefully to make sure that safeguarding guidance is accurate, up to date and customised to the school. Safeguarding policies are high profile. Policies and procedures are publicised well on the website. Staff understand what is expected and consistently follow school procedures.

Clear procedures ensure that staff know what to do if they have a concern. Teachers and support staff correctly explained the steps they have taken to communicate any concerns. They know what to do in the event of any concerns about staff or the headteacher. Staff and governors have received appropriate training in safeguarding. An additional designated safeguarding leader is about to receive training for her new role.

Parents I spoke to did not have any concerns about their children's safety, now or in the past. They say that their children are safe and confident to speak to adults in school. Parents say that teachers communicate with them well about their children. Pupils also say that they feel safe and are well supported by adults. Parents feel reassured by the improved information and regular communication about the safeguarding policy and procedure.

The school has introduced a robust computerised system for recording concerns and actions. Staff understand and follow the procedures for reporting and recording issues and actions. The new system provides a proper chronology of events, and appropriately records communications, minutes of meetings and actions taken by school staff and other agencies. As a result, designated safeguarding leaders can access information quickly. They have a clear overview of cases and can review the pattern of events over time. Leaders have the necessary information to act promptly and tackle any emerging concerns.

Current cases are being followed up in an appropriate and timely way with other agencies. School leaders are in direct communication with the multi-agency support team, which is on hand to give advice on particular issues.

At the time of the previous inspection, the lack of a direct channel of communication between governors and staff was a key weakness in the oversight of safeguarding by governors. There was no staff governor. Governors did not regularly visit school to discuss issues with staff informally. Since the inspection, the chair of the governing body has spent a lot of time in school and communication between staff and governors is effective. However, a staff governor has not joined the governing body. This decision has been delayed while the governance of the school is under review.

Governors lacked evidence for the assertions made by leaders about the quality of safeguarding. Concerns about confidentiality prevented them from finding out how well recording and referral procedures were working. Governors now have examples of what effective records should look like. They sample anonymised records to assure themselves that safeguarding procedures are secure.

The previous inspection also found a lack of rigour in the leadership of special educational needs and the management of pupil premium funding. The new special educational needs coordinator is introducing a more systematic approach to identifying needs, planning provision and recording and reviewing the impact of actions. Parents of pupils whose special educational needs have been identified recently said that they felt optimistic about future action. Plans are in place to improve the impact of pupil premium funding on the progress and well-being of disadvantaged pupils. A new middle leader is developing a more rigorous approach to assessment to identify and meet pupils' learning needs more promptly and accurately.

External support

Following the inspection, local authority staff promptly carried out an audit that identified a range of specific weaknesses in safeguarding procedures. You and your deputy headteacher drew up a detailed action plan to tackle the identified deficiencies. The local authority set up a group with leaders and governors who monitored the implementation of the plan regularly and effectively. The school effectiveness officer from the local authority carefully reviewed and tested the implementation of the plan and helpfully suggested further improvements. You have used your experience and expertise effectively to bring about improvements in the leadership, management and culture of safeguarding.

Priorities for further improvement

- Appoint a staff governor to enable direct, formal communication between staff and governors in relation to safeguarding and other matters.
- Ensure that staff more accurately assess and meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs in order to promote the learning and well-being of vulnerable pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell
Her Majesty's Inspector