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Mr Bowkett
Summerhill School
Lodge Lane
Kingswinford
West Midlands
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Dear Mr Bowkett

No formal designation inspection of Summerhill School

Following my visit with Jane Spilsbury, Her Majesty's Inspector and Peter Humphries, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 14 June 2018, 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, aspects of the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school (including governance), and the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils at the school.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. I met with you and the deputy headteacher to discuss the school's self-evaluation and development plan. I discussed safeguarding arrangements with the designated safeguarding lead and deputy designated safeguarding lead. I met with four representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors and vice chair of governors. I reviewed minutes of meetings of the governing body.

Inspectors held meetings with a number of leaders to discuss the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for attendance, special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, behaviour and exclusions, and additional funding. Inspectors visited lessons to ascertain the impact that teaching is having on learning. During

observations, inspectors reviewed the standard of work in pupils' books. Some observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors spoke to pupils throughout the school day and met with the junior leadership team at lunchtime.

Inspectors took account of responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and met with parents and carers at the end of the school day.

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

Safeguarding is effective. However, inspectors identified other aspects of provision that leaders and governors must further develop to improve the overall effectiveness of this school.

Context

There are 1007 pupils on the school's roll. Over 90% of pupils are White British. Approximately 4% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is very low. A similar proportion of pupils is identified as having SEN and/or disabilities or an education, health and care plan as that found nationally. There has been a very high turnover of staff since the last inspection. As a result, some staff have been in post for a short period of time. A number of teachers are due to join the school in September 2018.

In 2016, the school was judged to require improvement. Since then, senior leaders have instigated wide-ranging changes. These changes have been received with very mixed views by stakeholders. While some staff and parents stated that change was necessary and has brought about improvements, others feel that it has not been managed effectively by senior leaders. In particular, some parents have raised concerns about the quality of communication, the high turnover of staff and the overall impact on pupils' personal development and achievement. The overall quality of communication and relationships with some parents and staff are a cause for concern. Leaders and governors acknowledge these concerns and, as a priority, are taking steps to address them.

The school conducted its own parental questionnaire in the spring term. Approximately two thirds of respondents stated that they feel that their children are happy and make good progress. Responses to some questions were mixed. For example, around one third of respondents were unable to state whether they agreed or disagreed that the school is well led and managed or whether it is improving.

Governors are clear about the school's shortcomings. They have improved the rigour with which they review information about the school. Leaders provide governors with a wide range of information about the school's effectiveness. Governors review this information, and minutes of meetings evidence that they hold leaders to account well. However, any resulting actions from discussions with

leaders are not recorded in sufficient detail. This makes it hard for governors to track developments in subsequent meetings.

The school's safeguarding team has further improved arrangements for safeguarding since the last inspection. Child protection files and records are well organised and detail the actions that leaders take to keep pupils safe. Referrals to the local authority are made in a timely manner. Where appropriate, leaders work with families and other agencies to establish early support. There is a positive culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff know what to do if they have a concern.

The school's single central record is compliant and details the checks that are made when staff are recruited. I sampled several staff files to crosscheck references and other aspects of compliance. These were all found to be complete. The school's safeguarding policy appropriately reflects the guidance issued by the Secretary of State. Staff receive regular training and the designated safeguarding lead is knowledgeable and understands pupils' needs well. The management of any incidents is appropriate, but some parents feel that they do not always receive a quick enough response to their concerns.

Parents have raised concerns relating to the installation and use of closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras. The school has addressed this matter and leaders have confirmed that cameras are not operable and will shortly be removed from toilet areas.

Leaders' self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness is broadly accurate. Their priorities for improvement are appropriate. The weaknesses that were identified at the last inspection are beginning to be addressed but remain relevant. Due to the instability in staffing, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent.

Where teaching is strongest, teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and have very positive relationships with pupils. Leaders that jointly observed lessons with inspectors demonstrate a strong understanding of the effectiveness of teaching and know how it needs to improve further. Improvement work has been hampered by the high turnover of staff. Some teaching does not adequately meet the needs of different pupils. In some subjects, including English, pupils' basic errors are not routinely addressed.

Pupil premium funding has been used by the school to develop the overall quality of teaching and learning and provide additional support to pupils. However, assessment information and work in pupils' books are not yet demonstrating that this additional expenditure is supporting pupils to make consistently strong progress. There is insufficient analysis of the effect of some strategies. Leaders' evaluation of the impact of additional funding on pupils' progress is not detailed enough.

Pupils' outcomes improved significantly in 2017 compared to the previous year. Progress 8 measures were above national figures and 83% of pupils achieved a grade 5+ in GCSE English and mathematics. This is significantly above the national figure of 64%. However, outcomes for pupils currently on roll are variable. Work in pupils' books shows that progress is not consistently strong.

Leaders have a good understanding of the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and the support they receive is having a broadly positive impact on their achievement and attendance. Positive relationships have been forged with most of these pupils' parents. However, additional support for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs is not always put in place quickly enough. Furthermore, some parents expressed concerns about the level and quality of support that their children receive. Leaders recognise that there is more work to do in securing good outcomes for pupils and improving communication with parents.

Pupils' behaviour during the inspection was good. The school has a calm and orderly atmosphere. Pupils conduct themselves well during social times. Members of the junior leadership team are proud of what they do. Pupils are busy establishing a range of different opportunities for their peers. These include a disco for Year 6 pupils who are about to join the school and current Year 7 pupils. The junior leadership team believes that the disco will help younger pupils to settle and will provide them with an opportunity to build friendships. This exemplifies pupils' desire to support one another. Pupils in the team hold very positive views about the school. They are keen to make a difference and support the school in its journey of improvement.

Leaders have appointed a group of pupils as anti-bullying ambassadors. These pupils expressed an interest in supporting their peers and have received training. They shared examples of how they help other pupils to overcome any difficulties they experience with their friends.

Some pupils hold negative views about the school. They feel that senior leaders have introduced changes too quickly. Some pupils do not feel that they have been involved enough in the changes that have been implemented.

Leaders hold a wealth of information about the behaviour of different groups of pupils. This information indicates some improvements in pupils' behaviour over time, but it is not analysed well. The evaluation of pupils' behaviour and conduct was identified as an area for improvement at the last inspection. This aspect of leaders' work remains a weakness.

Attendance is improving. Attendance analysis is detailed and there are no significant gaps between different groups of pupils. This aspect of school provision is well led. However, fixed-term exclusions and permanent exclusions are too high. This is particularly the case for older pupils in key stage 4.

External support

The local authority has provided support to the school, but this has not fully addressed the concerns raised by some parents. In consultation with other organisations, a date has been agreed for the removal of CCTV cameras. Local authority representatives stated that they plan to offer further support and challenge.

Priorities for further improvement

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they work in partnership with the local authority to address parental and staff concerns
- any concerns raised by parents and staff, specifically those relating to the quality of communication and the manner in which senior leaders implement change, are acted on appropriately and result in more positive working relationships and better outcomes for pupils
- leaders continue to invest further in training for teachers to reduce inconsistency in teaching, learning and assessment and improve the retention of staff
- learning in all subjects contributes further to the development of pupils' literacy skills
- the impact of additional funding on pupils' progress is evaluated in greater detail so that pupils can be better supported
- they continue to reduce the number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions
- support for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs is put in place more quickly
- information about pupils' behaviour is analysed in greater detail so that any strengths and areas that require further development are better understood.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Keay

Her Majesty's Inspector