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Miss Claire Wright
Interim Headteacher
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Dear Miss Wright

No formal designation inspection of Harrop Fold School

Following my visit to your school on 12 March 2019, 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 at the school.

Evidence

I scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. I also met with you and the interim executive headteacher, groups of pupils, teachers, the chair of the governing body, the governor responsible for safeguarding and a representative of the local authority.

I considered a range of documents summarising the actions taken by school leaders and the local authority in response to the previous inspection in October 2018, when safeguarding was judged to be inadequate, including: records of training for staff in safeguarding; the local-authority-commissioned audit of safeguarding procedures in the school; attendance records; exclusion procedures; bullying and behaviour logs; procedures and practices for pupils attending alternative provision; procedures for recruiting staff; schemes of work relating to personal, social and health education; policies relating to safeguarding; and a selection of case studies.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time leaders are taking effective action to address the areas for improvement related to

safeguarding.

Context

The school is an average-sized secondary school. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is much higher than the national average and deprivation in the school's community is high. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and who have an education, health and care plan are above average. The school population is much less stable than that seen in many schools.

The school was inspected in October 2018. Overall effectiveness was judged to be inadequate in all areas and therefore the school is now subject to special measures. At that time, safeguarding was found to be ineffective.

Since the last inspection, you have stepped up as interim headteacher and the previous interim headteacher provides leadership support. Several other leaders are in interim posts as some leaders are currently on long-term absence.

Harrop Fold is now subject to an academy order from the regional schools commissioner. The local authority is currently working with the regional schools commissioner to arrange a sponsor for the school.

Inspection findings

Leaders and governors have devised an effective development plan that focuses on the school's priorities. Although there are many areas for improvement, safeguarding has been paramount. Since the last inspection, safeguarding systems, processes and procedures have been established. All policies relating to safeguarding have been reviewed and updated. Now that safeguarding is compliant with statutory requirements, it is possible for leaders to continue to build a safeguarding culture. The bulk of this work relates to pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe. As this letter will show, you came in to support a school that was putting children at risk daily. This is no longer the case.

After the inspection in October, the local authority undertook a review of safeguarding processes and procedures. Most of the actions that had been identified at the inspection were in hand. The remaining actions are easily remedied bar one. The most challenging of actions requiring attention is to improve pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe. The opportunities across the curriculum are limited and while personal, social and health education has been introduced, the delivery of the programme is not effective. Pupils are not being given the necessary safeguarding knowledge and information in the curriculum.

A safeguarding team has been created. There are a number of staff who have received the required training to handle referrals. Newly introduced systems for recording safeguarding incidents have increased the accountability of staff. The

safeguarding files that I reviewed comply with expectations. Information is recorded, referrals are carried out in a timely way and actions are followed up.

All staff and governors have appropriate and up-to-date safeguarding training, including training to recognise radicalisation and extremism. Staff know what to do if they have any concerns. Their awareness and knowledge of safeguarding are much improved. No longer is it seen as the responsibility of a few.

The single central record meets requirements and the omissions identified at the last inspection have been rectified. Importantly, all staff have now been checked. Recruitment procedures have been established and are appropriate.

Leaders have been working hard to gain the support and trust of the whole school community in the face of some significant hostility. This has been most evident from some parents. However, you have provided much-needed stability across a number of areas of the school and you are beginning to restore their confidence in it. Staff described the school as 'feeling more like a school' and they are confident in its future. Staff are working very hard to remedy the widespread and endemic weaknesses in the school, but they acknowledge that the same is true of leaders. They described the staff as being like a team with the vast majority all working for the same outcome, which is to improve the quality of education at Harrop Fold. Staff share the view of leaders that improving the poor behaviour of pupils is a significant challenge for the school.

Staff welcome the training on behaviour management. They, and the school's own records, indicate that behaviour is improving but is far from good. Following the raised expectations regarding behaviour, fixed-term exclusions and permanent exclusions are now a recognised sanction. Importantly, when exclusions have been issued, they are recorded correctly. A group of pupils still believe that the behaviour expectations do not apply to them. They believe no one, least of all staff, should be telling them what to do. Nonetheless, this culture is changing.

Attendance records are now accurate. The attendance team tracks and monitors the attendance of pupils. Leaders have raised the profile of attendance. However, the importance of attending school is not always understood by some parents who condone their children's absence. The checks on pupils who are absent are systematic and thorough. Telephone calls home on the first day of absence, emails and appropriate home visits inform you of where pupils are and that they are safe. You have reviewed how you deal with pupils who go missing from education, and your records show that referrals are made in line with statutory guidance. Form tutors now play an increasingly important role in following up pupils' absence. However, overall attendance is still well below the national average, and persistent absence is far too high.

Pupils now attend a school that is secure. At the time of the last inspection, they showed inspectors how they could freely leave the school premises at any time

during the school day. This is no longer possible. Also, pupils would freely miss lessons. While I saw a number of pupils wandering around the building during lesson time, you pointed out that now they are in the school building and safe rather than being elsewhere, off site and with their whereabouts unknown to leaders.

A number of pupils attend off-site provision. While leaders monitor the attendance of these pupils daily, they do not take enough responsibility for assuring themselves of the quality of education and personal development of pupils while they are at these providers. Instead, leaders have chosen to outsource this aspect of their role. Although the outsourcing is part of a formal agreement with the local authority, leaders are too reliant on what they are being told rather than being sure for themselves.

The governing body is very different since the time of the last inspection and has a new chair and vice-chair. It is well informed and its members bring a range of valuable experience and essential skills to their roles. Governors are fully involved in the safeguarding processes. Safeguarding is a standing item on the agenda for all full governing-body meetings. This enables them to accurately track improvements over time accurately.

External support

The school is receiving support from the local authority, which has secured interim leadership from a nearby school. Support is also being provided by a large multi-academy trust, which has also obtained additional resources at executive-leadership level.

Priorities for further improvement

- Strengthen the school's procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of alternative provision.
- Improve the opportunities in the curriculum to teach pupils about matters relating to safeguarding.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector