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21 October 2015

Ms Sarah Roscoe
The Rise School
Browells Lane
Feltham
London
TW13 7EF

Dear Ms Roscoe

No formal designation monitoring inspection of The Rise School

Following my visit to your school on 1 October 2015, 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, and the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils at the school.

Evidence

I scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. Meetings were held with you, senior leaders, other members of staff and the Chair of the Governing Body. A telephone conversation was held with the Chair of the Rapid Improvement Group, who is also a trustee of the Autism Schools Trust. Together, we made short visits to all classes and groups to observe pupils' behaviour and engagement in learning. A range of documents were scrutinised, including information about behavioural incidents and attendance, reports to the governing body, policy documentation and your plans for school improvement. I looked in detail at information about the education provided for three pupils and spoke to the parent of one of these by telephone.

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

The school's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

Context

The Rise School opened in September 2014 under the government's free school programme. It is the first school to be opened by the Autism Schools Trust. The school is registered for pupils aged four to 18 who have autistic spectrum disorders. There are currently 34 pupils on roll aged from five to 14, all of whom have a statement of educational need or an education, health and care plan. Although registered to admit both boys and girls, currently there are no girls on roll.

Around half of the pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds, with roughly one in five speaking English as an additional language. Around a third of the pupils are entitled to free school meals.

In January 2015, the local governing body was constituted by the Autism Schools Trust and the Chair of Governors was appointed. At the start of the summer term, the headteacher left the school. The current headteacher acted as part-time interim headteacher during the summer term, and became the full-time substantive headteacher in September 2015.

Governors, leaders and staff at all levels remark on a significant change in culture which has taken place within this school in recent months. The new headteacher identified urgent priorities for the summer term and ensured that these were tackled swiftly. Changes were made to improve the security of the building and the safety of pupils at the beginning and end of the day. Learning environments have been reorganised and improved so that classrooms and teaching areas are bright, attractive and respected by pupils. The pace of improvement has accelerated since the beginning of September when the headteacher's appointment became full time and permanent. She is now developing a school improvement plan, identifying priorities for the coming year and actions that will be taken in order to address these. This plan is currently under construction.

Leaders have reviewed and revised their documentation relating to safeguarding and child protection. These documents are in line with current guidance. Staff have been recently trained in aspects of child protection, with a particular focus on issues relating to the special educational needs of the pupils. The designated safeguarding lead is new to his role, but has received relevant training and maintains rigorous and detailed records of any concerns that are raised. Governors have decided that another senior leader, likely to be the headteacher, should also be trained as soon as possible in order to ensure that there is always a suitably trained leader on site to deal with any concerns.

There is a robust system in place to make sure that all the appropriate checks are carried out when new members of staff are appointed. The single central record of

these checks is complete and also holds other relevant information, such as the date each member of staff attended training on child protection.

The headteacher has appointed a number of associate leaders to support the school's development. Each associate leader works part time, or for a fixed period, in order to develop strategy in a specific area. For example, a consultant supports the school's improvement work one day per week. Another, a skilled and experienced teacher of pupils with autism, works alongside teachers and teaching assistants to develop their specialist skills in this area. A third is taking on responsibility for ensuring that rigorous performance management procedures are in place for all staff. Alongside this, the headteacher is 'talent-spotting' future leaders from within the existing staff team and ensuring that they receive relevant professional development opportunities to secure the sustainability of the school leadership in the longer term.

Everyone I spoke to during the inspection remarked on the significant improvements in pupil behaviour that have resulted from new systems and structures that have been implemented. Leaders have introduced three core rules for which pupils receive points in each lesson: be safe, be respectful and be polite. This revised system has ensured that expectations are higher and pupils understand where the boundaries lie. Rewards are meaningful and sanctions are chosen carefully so that they impact on the pupils' behaviour in future. For example, rather than excluding a pupil when they display challenging behaviour, the school has found that requiring them to attend 'afternoon school' until 6.00pm is more likely to deter them from repeating the behaviour.

In order to support this work further, leaders have adapted the curriculum to include more attractive activities for pupils. One example of this is the introduction of karate lessons. Pupils' attitudes have improved because the curriculum is interesting and engages them in their learning.

Members of staff have received specialist training in dealing with challenging behaviour. They recognise the importance of de-escalation techniques in avoiding more difficult situations. Staff are more confident when dealing with challenging behaviour because they have the appropriate training and support. Members of staff say they feel safer as a result. They are positive about their roles and are very supportive of the leadership team.

As a consequence of the school's work to improve behaviour, the number of incidents reduced significantly over the summer term from 146 in April to 32 in July. The number of more serious incidents reduced from 11 in April to one in June and none in July. The number of physical interventions and absconsions also reduced significantly. There was only one absconsion in the summer term, which did not involve any pupil leaving the campus.

Leaders have completed a range of assessments for each pupil on roll and are developing individual plans and targets to ensure that each pupil's needs are fully addressed. These plans are only just being put in place and are not yet embedded in practice across the school.

The Chair of Governors, supported by the trustees and other governors, has acted appropriately to address concerns raised about the school. She asks for information about safeguarding to be reported to her in a timely fashion. Governors and trustees offer appropriate support and challenge to the school. Leaders provide the governors' pupil well-being committee with detailed and informative reports which clearly demonstrate the improvements in safeguarding practices and behaviour.

External support

The Autism Schools Trust are providing effective support for the school. Alongside the governing body, they have set up a rapid improvement group with delegated authority to make changes in the school so that improvement is accelerated. They have supported the headteacher's investment in associate leaders to add breadth to the school's capacity while it develops leaders from within the staff team and as the school grows. Governors and trustees have ensured that the external consultant who provided staff training in child protection is on hand to provide advice and support for the designated safeguarding lead, if needed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that clear, consistent systems for the management of behaviour and related individual plans are fully embedded across the school.
- Develop leadership capacity within the school at all levels so that, as the school grows, it becomes increasingly sustainable.
- Ensure that a full and comprehensive improvement plan is in place, setting out the school's objectives and identifying how progress towards these will be monitored and evaluated.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Hounslow, to the Secretary of State for Education and to the Chair of the Governing Body. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Gaynor Roberts

Her Majesty's Inspector