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Mrs Alison Tilbrook
IES Breckland
Crown Street
Brandon
Suffolk
IP27 0NJ

Dear Mrs Tilbrook

No formal designation inspection of IES Breckland

Following my visit to your school on 23 January 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 procedures at the school.

Evidence

I scrutinised the single central record, safeguarding policies and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. I met with you, members of the senior leadership team and three members of the governing body. I spoke with a representative from the local authority.

I also reviewed reports to the governing body, curriculum plans and an audit of safeguarding procedures. I observed behaviour in lessons and at lunchtime, met with pupils, individually and in groups, and spoke with teachers and other members of staff.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

IES Breckland is a smaller-than-average secondary school with 483 pupils on roll. It is part of the Sabres Educational Trust. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals are broadly average. There is a larger-than-average proportion of pupils included in the register of special educational needs (SEN), but a broadly average proportion who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.

Since the previous inspection, concerns have been raised with Ofsted about the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures in the school. I visited the school to inspect how well leaders have secured the culture and effectiveness of safeguarding.

The school was last inspected in September 2017, and at that point safeguarding was found to be effective. My visit confirmed that safeguarding continues to be effective. You have created an open and trusting environment where staff and pupils know that they should speak up if they are worried.

Pupils I spoke with during the inspection consistently told me that, if they are worried about themselves or about a friend, there is someone in school whom they can talk to. They told me that teachers are understanding. Pupils feel confident in talking to their mentors and to staff in your Student Support Centre (SSC). You have ensured that staff are available to help pupils and that pupils are comfortable approaching them.

You have taught pupils effectively how to keep themselves safe. Through assemblies and lessons, such as information and communication technology (ICT) and personal, social and health education (PSHE), pupils learn about how to protect themselves. They learn about cyber-bullying and how to stay safe online, as well as about the need to speak up if they are struggling with their own mental health.

Pupils told me that bullying is quite rare. When it does happen, staff deal with it quickly and well. Pupils also explained that it is OK to be different. It does not matter to them if people have different beliefs and understandings of themselves and of the world. The school is a welcoming place in which people can be themselves. Pupils feel safe.

Teachers new to the school have been well trained. They are aware of school policies and procedures, and alert to the signs of abuse. When I asked new teachers to describe, in one word, the attitude to safeguarding in the school, they said 'thorough'.

All members of staff I spoke with are aware of the need to pass on concerns about the well-being of pupils. They showed a good awareness of whom to speak to, and

they know that safeguarding is a high priority for you and other leaders. You have told teachers that reporting concerns overrides any other activity. They know that they can interrupt whatever senior leaders are doing if they have a worry to pass on. You have successfully secured the commitment of staff to keeping pupils safe.

Governors' approach to safeguarding mirrors that of leaders. They are committed to the well-being of pupils and take their responsibility seriously. They review and update the safeguarding policy regularly and monitor what goes on in the school. For example, governors recently reviewed your single central register of recruitment and employment checks. They receive regular reports on the use of the SSC and discuss safeguarding matters in committee meetings. Governors are trained to keep pupils safe, including on how to recruit staff safely. Governors play an effective role in protecting pupils at the school.

You and other leaders have established a clear and well-understood system for passing on even minor concerns. You are aware of the need to monitor these and are vigilant in recording information which comes to you. Your systems for recording minor concerns are effective, but you recognise that small changes to the way you maintain these records would ensure that they highlight emerging issues even more clearly. You regularly review the safeguarding policy but also recognise that some other policies relating to pupil welfare still need to be updated more regularly.

External support

You engage effectively with external agencies to keep pupils safe. You pass on concerns in a timely fashion and you maintain sound records with a chronological log of developments. You recognise that the systems in use could be even more robust if all safeguarding communication with external agencies was recorded in one place. You also agree that it would be beneficial to ensure that requests to other agencies for assistance are routinely followed up to ensure that others take the required actions.

During the inspection, you spoke with me about an incident about which you did not seek advice from the local authority when you should have. As leaders, you have reflected on this situation and taken on board the guidance you subsequently received. Now, you have adapted your practice to ensure that you do seek advice each time it is required.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve systems for recording information so that concerns and communications about pupil welfare are always clear and coordinated effectively.
- Continue to review safeguarding policies so that they are all fully up to date.

- Always seek and act on advice from the local authority when required.
- Routinely check that external agencies have acted on concerns that you have passed to them.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer of Sabres Educational Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andy Hemmings

Her Majesty's Inspector