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30 April 2024

our ref: CAO-004307

Please quote this reference

Mr Naeem Bashir
Headteacher
By email to: naeem.bashir@northroadacademy.com

Dear Mr Bashir

Complaint about the monitoring inspection of North Road Academy on 20 February 2024

I am writing in response to your online complaint form and attachment of 15 March 2024 regarding the monitoring inspection of your school on 20 February 2024.

In line with Ofsted's published complaints policy, where appropriate, your concerns have been linked for conciseness and clarity under the main headings below. Please be assured that, while I may not have referred specifically to all the concerns you raise in my response to you, they have all been considered. In considering your concerns, this has included a review of the inspection evidence, the inspection report, the report review process, 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' and the handbook for additional inspections of independent schools.

Your concerns about the independent school standard Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils not being met

You state that, during the inspection, it was correctly brought to your attention that the independent school standard Part 3 Welfare, health, and safety of pupils, was not being met due to the proprietor of the school also being the designated safeguarding lead (DSL). You explain that the proprietor of the school has been the DSL since April 2019 and raise concerns that this issue was not identified at the previous inspections of the school which took place on 13 September 2023 and 28 February 2023 to 2 March 2023. You explain that, had this issue been identified during one of these previous inspections, you would have taken immediate action to ensure that this standard was met, as you have now done. Given that the issue has now been addressed, you request that the judgement is reconsidered.

As part of my investigation of your complaint, I have read your detailed response to the draft report, as well as the lead inspector's reply in the final report cover letter. In his reply, the lead inspector reminded you of the requirement to follow the Department for Education's (DfE) guidance, set out in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2. He acknowledged the actions that you have taken since the inspection and recommended that a next step would be to contact your DfE representative to share those actions.

I have also read the previous inspection reports for your school and have examined the lead inspector's evidence for the inspection. All of these match your account. The previous two inspection reports state that Part 3 standards around safeguarding were met. The evidence for the most recent visit shows that the lead inspector noticed the issue around proprietors being named as DSLs in the safeguarding policy in his pre-inspection analysis. He recorded checking this with you in his initial meeting on site, to confirm that he had correctly understood the school's leadership structure. The lead recorded seeking advice from Ofsted's duty desk, a conversation involving a Senior His Majesty's Inspector and a member of Ofsted's national safeguarding team. His notes show a more detailed discussion then took place at a meeting about safeguarding. The lead inspector noted at the end of this meeting that you understood but were disappointed, as you felt that you could have fixed the issue if you had known about it.

My examination of the evidence has found that, at his final meeting with you, the lead inspector shared the positives he had found, including the way leaders had ensured that standards under Part 1 were now consistently met. He explained, however, that because paragraph 7 under Part 3 was not met, nor was paragraph 34 under Part 8. Again, the lead inspector noted that you were 'very disappointed that the school wasn't told this message consistently at previous inspections in 2023.'

Finally, I have considered the action plan you submitted along with your complaint. I note that you have taken swift action following the inspection, ensuring that two new DSLs have been appointed and trained, that the safeguarding policy has been updated and that staff have been informed of the changes.

I am grateful for the constructive tone of your complaint and your positive feedback on the conduct of the lead inspector. I would like to add my apology to that of the lead inspector, for the fact that this issue was not raised at the previous two inspections, as it should have been. Your assertion that you would have addressed it immediately, had it been raised, is supported by your response to the unmet

standards identified at previous inspections and your actions following this inspection.

However, the guidance in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' states on page 5,

'it is essential that **everybody** working in a school or college understands their safeguarding responsibilities. Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure that staff who work directly with children read **at least** Part one of this guidance.'

That expectation includes governors and proprietors.

Previous inspections should have brought paragraph 103, and particularly the sentence, 'It is not appropriate for the proprietor to be the designated safeguarding lead.' to your attention.

While this is the case, it is leaders' responsibility to be familiar with the guidance and apply it accurately so they ensure they adhere to statutory guidance. 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' is updated annually. It is part of leadership and management oversight to ensure that they keep abreast of any changes to the guidance so that they can apply it to their work.

For this reason, your complaint is not upheld.

Summary

I regret that aspects of the inspection gave you cause for concern, and I hope that this response has explained matters. I would like to reassure you that your concerns have been considered thoroughly and that the appropriate action has been taken.

Please note that your inspection report will now be published on our website five working days from today. If you have not already done so, you should share your report as set out in previous correspondence to you.

If you are concerned with any aspect of the way in which we have dealt with your complaint, please refer to Ofsted's complaints procedure, which is available on the Ofsted website at www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted.

Ofsted takes complaints very seriously and endeavours to handle concerns objectively, fairly, and efficiently. We would appreciate you taking time to provide feedback on how you feel we handled your concerns. We will use your feedback to improve our complaints handling process and improve the quality of our review and

responses we provide. Please submit your feedback using this form:
www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/W2BMK/.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Crozier
His Majesty's Inspector, Schools