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13 March 2020

Mr B Evans
Headteacher
Yardleys School
Reddings Lane
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West Midlands
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Dear Mr Evans

No formal designation inspection of Yardleys School

Following my visit with Gwen Onyon and Jane Epton, Ofsted Inspectors, to your school on 25–26 February 2020, I write on behalf of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education, Children’s Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This 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 wished to determine the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the school as concerns had been raised with Ofsted.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other records related to child protection and safeguarding. They evaluated the systems the school uses to record concerns, training for staff and the safeguarding policy. The lead inspector held discussions about safeguarding with the headteacher, deputy headteachers and the designated safeguarding lead (DSL). The inspection team spoke to members of teaching staff, newly qualified teachers, subject leaders, support staff, canteen staff and pupils about safeguarding and pupils’ behaviour. They evaluated around 200 responses to a parental questionnaire.

Inspectors visited lessons, observed social times and lesson changeover times. They spoke to pupils around the school. Inspectors considered pupils’ attendance, behaviour, internal, fixed-term and permanent exclusions. They evaluated the school’s systems for the administration of medicines, dealing with staff issues and allegations.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

There are 930 pupils on the roll of this mixed, non-selective, academy converter. The school is located in an area of high deprivation. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is broadly average. Staff turnover is low and there are no vacant teacher posts in the school. The headteacher has been in post since 2015 having been the deputy head teacher in the school previously.

Pupils are safe in this school because leaders' work in this area is effective. Pupils know who to talk to if they have a problem. Pupils say that they feel safe in and around school. Most say that bullying simply doesn't exist. Others say that if bullying does occur it is dealt with very quickly and effectively. The systems for safeguarding support effective communication between all those involved in keeping pupils safe.

The structure of staffing for safeguarding means that, although the DSL has oversight of all cases, pastoral staff take the lead on cases in the year group that they are responsible for. This means that the load of cases is spread. There is supervision of safeguarding work and those working with pupils know them well. Systems for recording are used very well. A new system is in place. Knowing that the case histories are an important part of child-protection work, a lot of time has been invested in making sure that these records are uploaded into the new system. The lead inspector scrutinised case files and actions. It is clear that swift action is taken when necessary, actions are logged and follow-up is undertaken. The DSL has an extremely robust oversight of cases and is very knowledgeable. All of the systems scrutinised by inspectors were marked by their completeness, thoroughness and attention to detail.

The school supports pupils with medical conditions well. However, the policy for this area of their work is spread across a range of policy documents that could lead to confusion about what is expected of staff.

Pupils' attendance is above the national average. No group of pupils has weak attendance. Leaders track attendance very carefully. Where pupils are persistently absent, the school does all it can to address this. The level of persistent absence is around the national average.

Inspectors observed pupils' excellent behaviour during the inspection. They spoke to hundreds of pupils who said that in lessons and around the school, this was the norm. Teachers told inspectors that behaviour is very positive. They said that some classes could be challenging but that leaders are extremely pragmatic and proactive in supporting staff to deal with any small pockets of low-level disruption. Around school, pupils are polite and respectful to one another. They wear their uniforms very smartly. A ban on mobile phones in school has led to more conversation between pupils and far less distraction. Pupils go into and out of rooms very sensibly without the need for teachers to tell them to do this, and with little supervision. Conversations between staff and pupils are warm and frequent. Pupils know that they are cared for.

Permanent exclusions are low, as are fixed-term exclusions. However, expectations of behaviour are extremely high and cover pupils' behaviour both in and out of school. The school does not shy away from supportive sanctions where these are necessary. These sanctions work. Few pupils are excluded, few leave the school, few pupils have repeat sanctions and Year 11 pupils' progress over the past three years has been exceptional.

Work to teach pupils how to keep themselves safe is effective. It is led intelligently. The curriculum content is carefully chosen and sequenced. Leaders have listened to pupils' comments about what they need to know. They have added to this content which covers local risks such as knife and drug crime. They also keep an eye out for emerging concerns and respond to these by changing, adapting or adding to their curriculum. The curriculum covers relationships, democracy and fundamental British values. It promotes good mental health and sexual health, and covers knife crime, drug and alcohol abuse. Leaders recognise that having a high-quality curriculum in this area depends on consistently improving teachers' expertise. They also know that it is important to check that the curriculum is being covered for all pupils. Leaders have addressed this by giving teachers very good training to use the materials provided. During this training, teachers can ask questions about the curriculum and share ideas about how to implement it. Leaders sensitively adapt materials for pupils with particular educational needs.

Employment checks are complete and robust. The school has many staff and governors 'safer recruitment' trained. At least one of these people sits on each interview panel. The staff handbook makes it clear that the school expects teachers to treat pupils respectfully. It is specific about the need for staff to model positive and respectful behaviour. Inspectors saw this in action around the school.

Governors play an active role in the leadership of safeguarding. For example, seeing that record-keeping could be further improved, they asked leaders to implement a new record-keeping system. Through the various reports they receive and their visits to the school, they have the information they need to offer support and challenge to senior staff. Governors have an excellent knowledge of safeguarding leadership and can, therefore, execute their statutory duties very well.

Priorities for further improvement

- Leaders should consolidate their policies on supporting pupils with medical conditions into a single policy so that staff are clear about the entirety of this particular area of the school's work.

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

Yours sincerely

Dan Owen
Her Majesty's Inspector