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16 October 2013

Mr J Hamp  
Acting Principal  
Springfields Academy  
Curzon Sreet  
Calne  
Wiltshire  
SN11 0DS

Dear Mr Hamp

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Springfields Academy**

Following my visit with Sharon Lewis and Maire Atherton, social care inspectors, to your academy on 14 and 15 October 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because the Chief Inspector was concerned about the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements and leadership and management at the academy. At the same time, there was an inspection of residential provision under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

I sought to:

- assess the academy's safeguarding policy and practice (including the role of governors), the management and governance arrangements in the absence of the principal, behaviour management at the academy, including physical intervention and records, staff training in behaviour management, admission, care plans and risk assessments on young people and how the academy handles complaints
- clarify the current status of the principal
- check who is the interim accounting officer for child protection and whether they are appropriately trained and experienced
- follow up concerns raised by a parent regarding a recent incident at the academy.

## **Evidence**

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We also looked at school policies and record-keeping related to admissions, behaviour, staff training and the handling of complaints, minutes of governing body meetings, and students' files. We met with you, individual students, members of the senior leadership team, and three members of the governing body, including the Chair. Telephone discussions were held with a small number of parents and carers, and with the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) for safeguarding. Inspectors also gained information about parents' and carers' views from the online survey, Parent View.

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

The academy's safeguarding arrangements do not meet requirements

The quality of leadership and management requires improvement.

## **Context**

The academy's roll has increased from 84 at the time of the last inspection in February 2013 and is currently 96 students. Almost all students board in one of the academy's four houses during the teaching week. All have a statement of special educational needs, primarily for behaviour, emotional and social difficulties or for an autistic spectrum condition. Since September 2012, there has been a marked increase in the proportion of students who have an autistic spectrum condition. These students now represent more than half of the academy's roll, a small number of whom have complex and challenging needs. The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is above average. This is government funding which the academy receives for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are in local authority care and the children of armed service personnel. You have taken up the post of acting principal since the principal took leave of absence on 7 October, following a serious incident that took place at the academy.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The academy provides an orderly environment where students report that they feel safe and that they are happy to come to the academy. During the inspection, harmonious relationships were observed between staff and students, and between students themselves, both in the residential houses and around the academy. Students often undertake routine tasks which foster their independence and help to develop a sense of belonging, for example when they set the dining tables and clear away at the end of meals. Positive behaviour and effort are acknowledged and celebrated, for example by a system of rewards which most students understand, and the nomination of 'student of the week' in assembly. Students like the busy

programme of activities provided at the end of the school day. They arrive on time for lessons and their attendance is high.

A minority of students display anxious and challenging behaviour linked to their special educational needs. Approximately three incidents occur on average each week that are recorded as requiring physical intervention. A small number of students report that occasionally staff use physical intervention too soon when tackling students' anxious or challenging behaviour. While incidents are logged and recorded, there is insufficient detail describing what circumstances led up to a student displaying challenging behaviour. This limits the ability of staff to use the information to analyse the possible causes of such behaviour and to respond accordingly.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

Some key aspects of safeguarding, particularly in relation to the management of incidents requiring physical intervention and the role of governors in monitoring behaviour across the academy, do not meet requirements, despite the strengthening of some areas of safeguarding recently. The academy does not meet fully three of the national minimum standards (NMS) for residential special schools.

All staff have had the necessary checks prior to appointment to ensure that they are eligible to work with children. In the past year, the academy has established a closer working relationship with the local social services team and the children and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) which has resulted in more effective reporting of child protection concerns. Staff receive appropriate training in child protection, and the acting principal, who is the interim accounting officer, has received higher level training. The newly appointed vice-principal of residential care has joined the academy's senior leadership team in order to provide a more unified approach between education and residential care staff to meeting students' needs. Regular meetings attended by the nominated governor for safeguarding and senior staff are held to consider child protection issues. The academy has a wide range of policies and procedures to help safeguard students. Care plans and risk assessments are in place for all students. However, the academy's safeguarding policy does not set out clearly and unequivocally the necessary immediate action that should take place following a serious incident where there is physical harm to a student involving a member of staff.

The work of senior leaders, staff and governors demonstrates that the academy responds quickly to changes and has the capacity to improve further. Leadership and management arrangements ensure the academy is running smoothly while the principal remains on leave. In several respects, the academy has responded positively to the changing needs of students admitted to the school. Staff have undertaken relevant training to help increase their knowledge and understanding of students with an autistic spectrum condition. Provision has been extended to meet the needs of students with more complex learning and medical disabilities, for example through providing additional therapy and programmes of study tailored to a student's individual needs. As a result, the academy has gained an accreditation

from a recognised body in the field of autism provision. However, there are weaknesses in procedures to ensure that all new students admitted to the academy are suitably placed. The admissions policy is quite broad and does not set out the particular special educational needs of students for which the academy can provide education. Also, although there are detailed procedures for inducting students to the academy, initial reviews of students' progress to check how well they are settling in do not always happen as specified in the academy's policy.

The academy has a range of policies to promote appropriate behaviour which emphasise a positive and a non-confrontational approach by staff. In order to manage incidents of challenging behaviour effectively, staff have received training in a recognised method of de-escalation and physical intervention and are given appropriate support following such incidents. Some records show that staff occasionally use other methods of physical intervention for which they have not received training. Also, records suggest a large proportion of restraints involve students who are in the care of their local authority. Senior staff do not use the information contained in the records to monitor the frequency of incidents or to detect the patterns of behaviour of different groups. Governors check the records of incidents and receive reports on the work of the academy in supporting individual students. However, the governing body does not receive information that provides an overview of the academy's impact on managing students' behaviour. This limits its ability to hold the academy to account fully in this area of its work.

The academy has a suitable complaints policy and records show that a small number of formal complaints have taken place and that they have been handled appropriately. One concern that has been raised anonymously is outstanding and is currently being followed up by the governing body.

### **External support**

The academy has benefitted from external advice and training, especially in raising staff knowledge of the needs of students with an autistic spectrum condition.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Urgently review the safeguarding policy to ensure that where there has been a serious safeguarding concern involving the physical harm of a student, the expectation is that the member of staff involved is suspended.
- Review the admissions policy to make clear the range of students' special educational needs for which the school provides education.
- Following admission, undertake timely reviews of students' progress in accordance with the academy's policy. (Ref NMS 2.5)

- Where a student's behaviour requires physical intervention, record in more detail the events leading up to the incident and use the information when deciding suitable follow-up action.
- Ensure staff only use physical intervention strategies for which they have received appropriate training. (Ref NMS 12.3)
- Improve the ability of the governing body to monitor and challenge the academy's impact on managing students' behaviour by presenting it with regular information on the number of incidents, overall trends and the patterns of behaviour of different groups. (Ref NMS 12.6)

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Wiltshire County Council, the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Redpath  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**