

Serco Inspections

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Mr John Wilson

Headteacher

Long Stratton High School

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Dear Mr Wilson

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Long Stratton High School

Following my visit to your school on 22 January 2014, 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 at the school, following a complaint made to Ofsted which raised serious concerns. The inspector sought to establish whether safeguarding procedures meet requirements, including the arrangements to tackle any concerns about bullying. This inspection was unannounced.

Evidence

I scrutinised the single central record, and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. Meetings took place with you and the senior staff, teachers and support staff, three groups of pupils, the ABAs (anti-bullying ambassadors) and the community police officer. Discussions with the governor who oversees safeguarding arrangements and with an adviser from the local authority took place on the telephone.

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

The school's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

Context

There are 646 pupils on roll. Proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups are much lower than found nationally and no pupils speak English as an additional language. Lower than average proportions of pupils are supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational need. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is below the national average.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Although the school's arrangements to safeguard pupils meet requirements, there are things that need to improve. The governor responsible for checking the quality of the arrangements has already identified some of the weaknesses found during this inspection. As a result, this governor has asked for some changes and is to meet with the senior team soon to review what has been done.

The weaknesses relate to the way that staff report and record what happens when there is a concern about pupils' well-being or behaviour, and how senior staff and the governing body evaluate how well their policies are implemented. For example, when staff report incidents of inappropriate behaviour such as bullying or disruptive behaviour in class, there is not always enough detail to give a clear picture of what has happened or to show the actions taken as a result. In some cases this is because of an over-reliance on emails between staff or on too little information put on the electronic log. In addition, when parents, pupils or staff raise concerns about pupils' safety and well-being, the way that the information is recorded and collated is not always methodical or detailed enough. This is not just an issue about the quality of the paperwork. It means that it is difficult for senior staff and the governing body to check rigorously that procedures and policies are followed properly, and how well they help to keep pupils safe.

Senior staff recently surveyed parents and pupils about safety and behaviour at school, including specific reference to bullying. The responses from parents show that approximately a quarter are not convinced that staff control bullying well. Senior staff plan to look into the reasons for this further. The responses from pupils show that they are very positive about how well staff help them to stay safe. Discussions with pupils during this inspection confirm this. They have a detailed awareness of the different forms of bullying and it is clear that staff have high expectations of them to behave well and to consider how their behaviour may affect others. This includes how derogatory language and inappropriate use of social media are forms of bullying. Pupils' responsibility to take action when they see inappropriate behaviour is actively encouraged by staff and between pupils. Pupils speak about the importance of being an 'upstander not a bystander', as promoted recently during an assembly. Discussions with staff, pupils and a local authority adviser, incident logs and an unannounced tour of the school with you, indicate that the overwhelming majority of pupils respect the rules and behave well.

Last term, a group of 12 ABAs were appointed, representing all age groups. They are a powerful group in advocating zero tolerance of bullying because they are well informed about the different forms of bullying and they take their responsibilities very seriously. Their role is respected by others, as shown in examples of pupils approaching them for support and advice. The ABAs are clear that their role is not only to take action when they see or hear about inappropriate behaviour in school, but also to prevent bullying within the local community and wider society by spreading knowledge and understanding of the issues. The next thing that the group wants to look into is how to raise awareness of bullying relating to individual differences, such as gender and disability.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Although the work of senior leaders takes into account a suitably wide range of factors that relate to bullying and pupils' safety, as explained in the policies, they have not checked how well their work helps to keep pupils safe. Similarly, although the number of pupils involved in exclusions, those supported as children looked after by the local authority and any child protection concerns are reported appropriately to the governing body, this information is not used to inform actions or the quality of provision. This means that weaknesses have not been identified or targeted for improvement. Nevertheless, the new governor responsible for checking the arrangements has made a good start in addressing this. For example, this governor has asked for changes to the single central record of checks on staff so that it can be monitored more effectively, and has discussed with senior staff their roles and responsibilities for safeguarding pupils.

Each of the senior leaders is trained as a designated officer for child protection. Although this makes sure that suitably trained senior staff are always available to respond quickly to any concerns, it is not sufficiently clear how the role of the main senior leader with responsibility for safeguarding pupils is complemented by the others. There have been occasions when actions could have been taken quicker and more decisively if responsibilities were clearer.

The school's website was relaunched recently but some of the policies and information about safeguarding pupils are not the current versions. The website includes some useful information for parents about sexting, which fits well with the recent work with pupils on this subject. The November 2013 newsletter explains the roles and responsibilities of the newly appointed ABAs.

The work with staff and pupils over the past year has successfully raised awareness of bullying and how it affects those in schools, as well the effect on society. This work is complemented by that of the community police officer, whose current focus is about internet safety and grooming. Staff and pupils are very clear about what will be done about incidents of inappropriate behaviour in school. School rules are made very clear in each classroom and in assemblies, and there is no reason why pupils would not know what is expected of them.

External support

Local authority advisers are very positive about the work of the senior management team since the previous inspection in promoting a positive, calm learning environment, including the work on anti-bullying. In response to the complaint that led to this inspection, an adviser spoke with senior staff to gain a view of how well the complaint was addressed, and with other advisers who know the school well. Local authority advisers plan to conduct a wider review to support leaders and the governing body in identifying areas of strength and areas for improvement.

Priorities for further improvement

- Senior staff to review formally the effectiveness of policies and procedures to safeguard pupils, including how well incidents of bullying and other inappropriate behaviour are recorded, reported and followed through.
- The governing body to make sure that they have good information about the quality of arrangements to safeguard pupils and that any weaknesses are identified for action in their improvement plans, taking into account the views of parents, pupils and staff.
- Local authority advisers to provide an independent audit of the effectiveness of leaders and the governing body in safeguarding pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Heather Yaxley
Her Majesty's Inspector