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Mrs Beverley Mabey
Executive headteacher
Washwood Heath Academy
Burney Lane
Stechford
Birmingham
West Midlands
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Dear Mrs Mabey

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Washwood Heath Academy

Following my visit with Jeremy Spencer, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 9–10 April 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 the no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out following a request from the Secretary of State.

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other related documents, minutes of academy board meetings, policies relating to safeguarding, the self-evaluation of the academy's performance, the recent report for the Investors in People award and the most recent survey of parents' views. They met with the executive headteacher, senior and middle leaders, staff responsible for overseeing safeguarding arrangements, attendance and behaviour management, a group of new staff and three groups of students. Her Majesty's Inspectors also met with three senior members of the academy board, the East Birmingham Schools Link Officer from the police and a police community support officer. They spoke with the Local Policing Commander on the phone. They toured the academy and considered the 77 responses from staff to Ofsted's questionnaire.

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

The academy's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

The quality of leadership and management is good.

Context

There are 1353 students on roll. Lower than average proportions of students are supported at school action, school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils eligible for additional funding for children in local authority care, those with a parent in the armed services and for those known to be eligible for free school meals is twice the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is four times the national average and many speak English as an additional language.

The academy is waiting for final approval from the Department for Education to change from a single academy to a multi-academy trust. The executive headteacher currently supports two local schools: Brownmead Junior and Infant School and Kingsbury School and Sports College.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students generally behave well in lessons and around the academy; they show respect and consideration for one another. There is effective support for those who behave less well. Fixed-term exclusions, although still higher than average, have reduced over the past three years.

The house system plays a significant role supporting students' well-being; it is highly valued by staff and students because it fosters good relationships among students of different ages and backgrounds. Any concerns about students are responded to quickly and carefully monitored by school staff.

The academy's emphasis on the importance of regular attendance has successfully reduced the rate of absence. Students' attendance is now in line with the national average.

The curriculum supports students' spiritual and cultural development well. Music and drama are very popular. Students are well informed about the different beliefs, cultures and traditions in modern Britain and globally. They have opportunities to deepen their cultural understanding through educational trips to areas of Britain that differ from their own, as well as to other countries.

A well-planned programme for assemblies, religious education and 'Dimension Days' gives students a good understanding of staying safe. They know about risks related to religious extremism, sexual health, drug misuse, use of the internet and social media and different forms of bullying. Students are taught to respect the things that make people different such as sexual orientation, appearance, ability and race. Students say that it is acceptable to be different at the academy.

The quality of leadership and management

There are robust systems to monitor students' welfare, which pick up any issues and deal with them swiftly. This includes referrals to support agencies and pursuing responses when they are not timely, or fall short of the academy's expectations. General training in child protection is thorough. Senior and middle leaders are trained in greater depth so that they can focus on the most pressing areas of vulnerability, such as drug misuse and gang culture. More recently, training has been provided on the potential risks of radicalisation and self-harm. Training in sexual exploitation is planned. Training for all staff at this advanced level is not yet available.

There are appropriate procedures to check the suitability of staff and visitors. Visitors are always closely supervised.

The executive headteacher, and key members of the board of governors, have provided a strong lead on issues of religious extremism. Leaders are ambitious for students to achieve well and are committed to providing opportunities for them to broaden their experiences beyond their immediate community. Governors have a good understanding of the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation. They are considering how to make sure that all governors fully support the academy's priorities for raising attainment and preparing students for living in multi-cultural Britain.

The executive headteacher is well supported by the senior team. She sets high standards and powerfully promotes equality of opportunity.

External support

The executive headteacher has worked with local community groups for many years and is well respected for the contribution that she brings. Her knowledge of the government's 'Prevent' strategy is used well to promote understanding of radicalisation and extremism; 'Prevent' advisers are invited to work with students on 'Dimension Days'. The executive headteacher chairs meetings of the local schools police panel. Police officers believe that the academy makes a significant contribution to racial and cultural harmony within the local area.

Academy staff actively seek collaboration with external partners to enrich the students' experience of business, careers and health services. Students value the variety and knowledge that these opportunities offer.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that all staff have access to the full range of available training relating to issues that may affect students safety and well-being

- Ensure that all governors are able to fully support the academy's priorities for raising attainment and preparing students for living in multi-cultural Britain.

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

Yours sincerely

Heather Yaxley
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc Chair of the Governing Body (or equivalent)