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Peter Sweeney
Saint Joan of Arc Catholic School
High Street
Rickmansworth
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Dear Mr Sweeney

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Saint Joan of Arc Catholic School

Following my visit with Asyia Kazmi, Her Majesty's Inspector, Jude Ensaff, Margaret Dutton and David Cousins, additional inspectors, to your academy on 20 October 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This monitoring 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 the Chief Inspector was concerned about the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements and aspects of the quality of leadership and management (including governance) at the academy.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. The minutes of governors and senior leadership team meetings were also considered. Inspectors met with you, the academy's designated child protection lead, teachers and five groups of students. Telephone discussions took place with the Chair of the Governing Body, the governor who has lead responsibility for safeguarding and a member of the local authority.

Evidence was also gathered from the observation of students' behaviour as they arrived at the academy, during break and lunchtime and as they moved between lessons. The quality of students' behaviour and learning was also observed within lessons. Inspectors considered the views of parents recorded on the online survey, Parent View.

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

The academy's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

Context

There are 1,245 students aged from 11 to 18 years on the academy's roll. The large majority of these students are White British; the proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is below the national average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly average. A well-below average proportion of students are supported through the pupil premium. This is additional government funding for pupils who are at risk of underachievement, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority.

The quality of leadership in and management of the academy

Academy leaders and governors are effective in fulfilling their responsibilities to ensure students feel safe and are safe.

The single central record and safe recruitment practice meet requirements.

Training is undertaken by all staff regarding child protection and the procedures to follow if they have concerns about the well-being of a child. New members of staff receive this information as part of their induction into the academy and there is an annual training update for all staff. In addition, training for the designated safeguarding lead is updated every two years. The governors have received child protection training and have made arrangements to extend this with further training that focuses specifically on their governance responsibilities. Governors have also decided to increase the frequency of visits during the academy day, and are considering how best to report findings of these visits back to the full group.

All of the staff who were interviewed by inspectors said that they had received copies of the key academy policies regarding safeguarding. They had also received the most recent information on this topic from the Department for Education. Senior leaders are now obtaining increased assurance of staff awareness of this important information by asking them to confirm they have read these documents.

Students spoke very positively about the academy and the support provided by their teachers and other staff. They told inspectors that behaviour was generally very good and that bullying was unusual. These views were supported by those recorded on Parent View. Students were confident that effective action would be taken if they told a member of staff that bullying was taking place. The academy has been successful in increasing students' understanding of e-safety and the safe use of social networking. The academy has also provided a workshop for parents on these topics.

The academy's records of students' behaviour have recently been improved using a computer database. This provides an improved analysis of any difficulties that arise. Paper records are not, however, fully consistent with information kept on the new database. These records support the views of students and parents, and the observations of inspectors, that behaviour is very good.

A further recent development involves a comprehensive database to monitor the support provided for, and the progress made by, all students who are at risk of underachievement. The academy also routinely holds multidisciplinary meetings to ensure the needs of vulnerable students are met. This is good practice; however, these meetings are not formally recorded.

Some staff provide additional tuition for students outside of academy time. Senior leaders and governors currently do not know the extent of this support.

The risk assessment for the academy site does not take sufficient account of its position in the town, the open nature of the site and the consequent ease of access of the public to the school. Access gates to the academy remain open throughout the academy day. Staff supervise students as they arrive and leave school, as well as at other times when they move between lessons. The expectation is that staff and students will challenge anyone who is on-site and is not wearing an identification badge. However, not all of the students interviewed were sufficiently aware of this expectation; in addition, the identification badges are small in size. There has been insufficient consideration of how supervising staff would seek assistance if this was required.

External support

The academy has recently worked closely with the local authority to audit its safeguarding procedures. This audit has contributed to senior leaders' and governors' assurance that requirements are being met.

Priorities for further improvement

- Senior leaders and governors should review the risk assessment for the academy site, including how assistance can be sought if required.
- Multidisciplinary meetings regarding the support provided for vulnerable students should be formally recorded.
- Senior leaders should gather information about the tuition provided to academy students by staff outside of academy time.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services, the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Regional Schools

Commissioner, the Education Funding Agency and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Charlie Henry
Her Majesty's Inspector