

CfBT Inspection Services

Suite 22

West Lancs Investment Centre T 0300 123 1231

Maple View

Skelmersdale

WN8 9TG

Text Phone: 0161 618 8524

[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T** 01695 566932

**Direct F** 01695 729320

**Direct email:** [hcarnall@cfbt.com](mailto:hcarnall@cfbt.com)

29 January 2015

Mr Nick Lowry

Principal

Co-operative Academy of Stoke-on-Trent

Westport Road

Tunstall

Stoke-on-Trent

ST6 4LD

Dear Mr Lowry

## **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Co-operative Academy of Stoke-on-Trent**

Following my visit with Jane Millward, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 27 and 28 January 2015, 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, aspects of the quality of leadership and management, and behaviour and safety of students at the academy. Thank you for your help during the inspection.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record (the vetting checks made on academy staff) and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. Meetings were held with the Principal, members of the academy leadership team, groups of students, the Chair and members of the Governing Body, a representative of the sponsor, and representatives of the local authority, outside agencies providing support for vulnerable students and Staffordshire Police Force. Telephone conversations were held with representatives of the Staffordshire Police 'Prevent' (part of the government's counter-terrorism strategy) team and representatives of the local authority providing human resources support to the academy. Inspectors observed an assembly and parts of lessons across all year groups. During these observations, inspectors looked at the work in students' books and spoke to them about the impact of students' behaviour on learning. Inspectors

met groups of students to discuss how the academy helps them keep safe from harm. The inspection team observed the behaviour of students as they arrived at the academy, at breaks and lunchtimes, and as they left the academy premises at the end of the day, as well as in lessons.

Additional documentation was scrutinised, including information about students' attendance and behaviour over time. A number of individual personnel files and child protection files were examined. The views of staff were considered through an analysis of the 69 responses to the staff questionnaire. There were too few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, for these to be considered.

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

The academy's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

## **Context**

The Co-operative Academy of Stoke-on-Trent opened in September 2010. The academy is part of the Co-operative Academies Trust and is sponsored by The Co-operative Group. The academy is smaller than an average-sized secondary school, with 707 students on roll. The majority of students are disadvantaged and therefore eligible for support through the additional government funding, known as the pupil premium. This proportion is much larger than average. (The pupil premium funding is available for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are in the care of the local authority.) Almost three-fifths of the students are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. This figure is much higher than in most secondary schools. A well above average proportion, two-fifths, of students speak English as an additional language. There are 34 different languages spoken in the academy. At about two-fifths, the proportion of students who are disabled or have special educational needs is broadly average. An above average proportion of students join or leave the academy part-way through their secondary education. The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. The Principal was appointed to the permanent post on 15 January 2015 after five months as acting Principal. He was previously one of the academy's Vice-Principals. There is little staff turnover; as a result, staffing is stable.

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

Academy leaders have implemented systems to ensure that students are safe from harm. Staff and students are clear about these procedures. For example, they know whom they should speak to if they have concerns or worries about their own, or someone else's, safety. All staff, including the designated safeguarding lead, have regular and appropriate safeguarding training and receive regular updates on the potential dangers to students. Additional training has been provided for staff in child protection, mentoring or behaviour management roles. Checks on the suitability of

staff to work with students are up to date and appropriately recorded. The Principal has completed 'safer recruitment' training and sits on all interview panels to ensure that staff are safely recruited. Students who are at risk of harm, for example physical, emotional or sexual abuse, are quickly identified and supported. This includes timely referrals to the local authority safeguarding children board. Child protection plans are effective in ensuring that students receive appropriate help. Rigorous arrangements are in place to track students who leave the academy, are absent from the academy for lengthy periods of time, or who are deemed 'missing from education'. For example, referrals are made to the local authority 'children missing education' team. In addition, all students returning to the academy after a period away, including prolonged trips abroad, have 'return-to-academy interviews' to ensure that they have not been the victims of abuse.

A culture of tolerance, respect and inclusion permeates the life of the academy. Academy leaders, including governors, actively promote democratic values. The academy's range of subjects, for example religious education and personal, social and health education, and assembly programme ensure that students are taught how to challenge racism, homophobia and other forms of prejudice. During this inspection, inspectors observed an assembly commemorating the seventieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. The assembly explored the reasons for prejudice and persecution and the stand that students should take against these attitudes. When asked, students stated that all assemblies have themes that encourage them to think critically about cultural and racial intolerance.

The majority of the academy's safeguarding policies, for example 'Staff behaviour and code of conduct', are informed by the government's document 'Keeping children safe in education'. However, the academy's child protection policy does not reflect the context of the academy and the community it serves. For example, the policy does not clearly state how the academy will identify and support students who are at risk of female genital mutilation, forced marriage and radicalisation. In addition, the policy does not make clear the processes for checking the impact of the academy's actions to keep students safe. Governors have not ensured that the policy is frequently reviewed or reflects the academy's student population and context.

Most of the students told inspectors that they feel safe. They said that the academy provides them with the necessary information and help to develop the skills to be able to resist the temptations to be unlawful, anti-social or to behave in a manner that is unsafe. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about how the academy is led and managed and about the academy's systems to ensure that students are safe and secure. All staff are proud to be associated with the academy.

Governors understand the academy's strengths and areas for development in relation to the quality of teaching and students' academic performance. However, governors do not have a secure understanding of the effectiveness of the academy's procedures for ensuring that students behave well and are safe. Leaders with responsibility for behaviour and attendance do not provide governors with a rigorous analysis of the information they have about students' attendance and behaviour. As

a result, governors do not have an accurate picture of aspects of the academy's safeguarding provision, for example students' attendance.

## **Behaviour and safety of students**

Relationships among students and between staff and students are positive. As a result, there is a calm and purposeful atmosphere in the academy. The vast majority of students who spoke to inspectors said that students treat each other with respect and that only a few lessons are disrupted by low-level poor behaviour. They added that bullying is infrequent and that incidents are dealt with swiftly by academy staff. Students told inspectors that they value the support and guidance they receive in iZone, the academy's mentoring and counselling base. This base helps and supports vulnerable students to improve their behaviour, social skills and attendance. The number of fixed-term exclusions is low and the number of students who have two or more exclusions is decreasing. Academy leaders take appropriate action, such as permanent exclusion, if a student's behaviour presents a danger to other students. However, the number of permanent exclusions is below average.

Students from different backgrounds mix well in lessons, at breaks and lunchtimes. They demonstrate respect for and tolerance of others' differences. Students know about different kinds of bullying including racial, homophobic and prejudice-based bullying. Students are proud of their academy and demonstrate this by wearing their uniform with pride. The academy buildings are treated with respect by all students. After busy breaks and lunchtimes, there is little litter as students use the bins provided.

Academy leaders have recognised that students' attendance is below average. Appropriate steps have been taken to raise students' and parents' awareness of the importance of good attendance. For example, members of the iZone team carry out home visits to students whose attendance causes concern. As a result, students' attendance has improved since the start of the spring term 2015.

## **External support**

Academy leaders work positively and effectively with a range of agencies, including the police and the local authority, to combat child sexual exploitation and the risks associated with substance abuse and involvement with gangs. As a result, students say they are well informed about these issues. The academy has worked positively and effectively with the local authority 'Prevent' team to develop a cohesive academy community. A representative of the local authority told inspectors that the academy engages with them in raising students' awareness of radicalisation and extremist behaviour. However, the academy's collaboration with the Staffordshire Police 'Prevent' team is less well developed. 'Prevent' training, to be delivered by the police's community resilience team, has recently been booked and will take place in February 2015. A representative of the Staffordshire Police 'Prevent' team told

inspectors that there is no evidence of radicalisation or extremism at Co-operative Academy of Stoke-on-Trent.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Ensure that governors frequently check and review the effectiveness of all safeguarding policies.
- Ensure that leaders thoroughly analyse the information they have about students' behaviour and attendance so that appropriate actions can be rapidly implemented.
- Further develop the links with the Staffordshire Police 'Prevent' team to ensure that students are further protected from the risks of radicalisation and extremism.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Stoke-on-Trent, the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Peter Humphries  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**