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Mr Rob Jaina  
Acting headteacher  
The Harbour School  
Station Road  
Wilburton  
Ely  
Cambridgeshire  
CB6 3RR

Dear Mr Jaina

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of The Harbour School**

Following my visit to your school on 15 April 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 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, aspects of leadership and management, and the behaviour and safety of pupils at the school. The inspection was carried out in response to two complaints which raised serious concerns. The complaints were deemed to be qualifying complaints and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that an unannounced inspection should take place to follow up the whole-school issues that were raised. The inspection sought to establish whether:

- safeguarding procedures are adequate, including the response to pupils presenting challenging behaviour
- suitable adjustments are made to behaviour management procedures according to the pupils' needs and disabilities
- staff are suitably trained and able to seek advice and support when required
- leaders and the governing body are effective in monitoring and evaluating policy and practice for behaviour management and safeguarding within the school.

## **Evidence**

I scrutinised the single central register of checks on staff, the records of restraints and inappropriate behaviour, attendance and exclusion data, the policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils, and the recent review conducted by local authority advisers. I met with you, the assistant headteacher, the lead officer for child protection, the business manager, the Chair of the Governing Body and two advisers from the local authority. I spoke to a group of pupils and some members of staff. I observed pupils as they arrived at school, in class and around the site, and on departure at the end of the school day. I considered the responses to the 36 questionnaires from staff. This inspection did not look at the residential provision.

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

The school's safeguarding arrangements do not meet requirements.

## **Context**

The Harbour School is a maintained residential special school for up to 73 pupils between the age of 5 and 16. There are currently 65 boys on roll. Eleven pupils can reside at the school for between one and four nights a week during term time. All pupils have emotional and behavioural difficulties, as set out in either a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.

The most recent Ofsted inspection of the education provision was in February 2013, when all aspects of the school's work were judged as outstanding. Ofsted's most recent inspection of the residential provision was in February 2015, when the residential pupils' safety was judged as inadequate and the overall effectiveness of the provision was judged as adequate. Seven of the national minimum standards for residential special schools were not met at that time. The report for the residential provision is available on Ofsted's website.

There have been significant changes to the leadership and management of the school over the past year. A new headteacher led the school from April 2014 and will leave the school at the end of this term. You took the post of deputy headteacher in September 2014 and you have led the school as the acting headteacher for the past three weeks. This arrangement will continue until the appointment of a permanent headteacher. The assistant headteacher has been in post since November 2014.

In October 2014, following concerns about the leadership and management of the school and pupils' safety, the local authority issued a warning notice. Local authority advisers carried out a whole-school review in February to check the progress made by leaders and governors in addressing the requirements of the warning notice.

I was made aware during this inspection that serious allegations of a child protection nature were being investigated by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate allegations of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the allegations were considered alongside the other evidence available at the time of this visit to inform the inspection judgements.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Over the past year, procedures to safeguard pupils did not adequately protect pupils or staff. There were too many incidents of inappropriate behaviour in the autumn and spring terms. Too many pupils were restrained or excluded from school on too many occasions. The attendance of too many pupils is too low. Low attendance together with the high incidence of disruptive behaviour has reduced pupils' opportunities for good academic achievement and personal development. Pupils say that staff have not managed behaviour fairly or assertively. Staff say that neither pupils nor staff felt safe or were safe. Until very recently, staff were not clear about the policies and procedures for managing behaviour. Staff are suitably trained but they did not receive consistent advice and support when it was required. As a result, staff lost confidence in their ability to manage pupils' behaviour, pupils' behaviour deteriorated and staff absence was very high.

In preparation for the new term, staff discussed and agreed new procedures to manage and record pupils' behaviour. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of the new arrangements but staff are keen to re-establish a positive climate for learning and behaviour. Pupils' behaviour observed during this inspection in lessons and around the site was generally calm and purposeful. It was the first day back for pupils after the Easter break and some found it difficult to settle. I observed appropriate levels of supervision, but staff did not always have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, and pupils took advantage of this.

The policy for safeguarding and child protection is up to date but has not been implemented effectively. As highlighted in the recent report for the residential provision, concerns have not always been passed to the relevant authorities and information is not always recorded in sufficient detail. Additional procedures are now in place to make sure that staff record information thoroughly, such as for incident logs and contact with pupils' families and external professionals.

The relevant checks on staff's suitability to work with children are recorded on the single central register. However, neither the governing body nor senior staff have checked that the register is accurate.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management, and pupils' safety and behaviour have deteriorated since Ofsted's inspection in 2013. A lack of clear strategic leadership led to a period of instability for staff and pupils, with a particularly

detrimental effect on pupils' behaviour. Staff lost confidence in the leadership team, they were uncertain about how to manage pupils' behaviour and did not feel supported when difficult situations occurred. High levels of staff absence meant that, last term, there was too much to do by too few senior leaders.

Although the governing body states that it will review annually the policies for safeguarding pupils, with the exception of the policy for safeguarding and child protection, policies have not been monitored, reviewed or evaluated for some time. Therefore, policies do not provide staff with sufficient support or reflect the most recent guidance. The governing body has taken action to address this shortfall, and revised policies are about to be presented for approval.

Together with the Chair of the Governing Body, you are working closely with local authority advisers to address the requirements of the warning notice and the recommendations from the recent whole-school review. For example, there is now a deputy leader for child protection and two more staff will complete the training for designated leaders. In addition, a concerted response to reduce the deficit budget means that, although still high, the deficit is significantly reduced. Staff and governors are very positive about the support from local authority advisers and acknowledge that there is still much to do to.

### **External support**

Local authority advisers acted quickly and decisively when concerns were identified in the autumn term 2014 and to the issues raised subsequently. The warning notice was followed up in February 2015 with a review of the school's work. A suitable plan is in place for on-going support and challenge to the senior leaders and the governing body. Senior advisers will be in school each week to work with staff. A local authority action group will be established and there will be a review later this term to check the effectiveness of the school's work. In recognition of senior leaders' inexperience and the reduced membership of the team, local authority support is focused appropriately on developing the capacity of the team. Financial support has been provided.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- make sure that pupils' behaviour is managed according to consistent, well-understood guidelines and procedures
- make sure that staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour
- reduce the incidence of exclusion and restraint
- make sure that pupils' attendance is at least in line with national averages for secondary schools

- implement updated policies and procedures to safeguard pupils and staff, and check that they are effectively implemented.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Cambridgeshire local authority, 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**