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5 June 2015

Mr Nicholson
Headteacher
The Westgate School
Cheriton Road
Winchester
SO22 5AZ

Dear Mr Nicholson

No formal designation monitoring inspection of The Westgate School

Following my visit with to your school on 4 June 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 at the school.

Evidence

I met with you, the school's designated person responsible for safeguarding, the Chair of the Governing Body, school staff and a representative from the local authority. I scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. I also reviewed information about students' behaviour, attendance and the curriculum.

I made brief visits to 14 lessons across Years 7 to 10, observing behaviour in mathematics, science, drama, geography, history, physical education (PE), and citizenship, philosophy and religion (CPR). I also observed students during a lesson changeover and at lunchtime. I met with four representative groups of students from Years 7, 9 and 10 and talked to students in lessons and around the school campus. I considered the views of a small number of parents and carers who contacted me during and after the inspection and a school survey of the views of 407 parents.

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

The school's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

Context

Westgate became an all-through school for students aged from four to 16 in September 2014. Currently there are 1,207 students in Reception and Years 7 to 11. Most students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language is lower than the national average. The proportion eligible for free school meals is around half the national average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs or supported at school action plus is lower than average. Slightly more students join and leave the school during the year than is typical.

Leadership and management of safeguarding

You and the designated person for safeguarding provide strong leadership in this area of the school's work, supported effectively by governors and key staff. Systems for ensuring students are kept safe and for responding to issues when they arise are thorough. You and your staff keep detailed records and liaise with other agencies where necessary. Leaders track issues relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance carefully. However, this information is not yet used consistently to identify any patterns that exist across particular groups or cohorts of students.

Safeguarding training is conducted regularly and within statutory timeframes. Key policies, including those on child protection, behaviour and equalities, are up to date and available on the school's website. At the time of the inspection, the single central record of checks on staff working at the school was complete. You and your staff are aware of the need to ensure this is monitored frequently, especially as staff numbers are set to grow considerably over the next few years.

The Chair of the Governing Body is knowledgeable about the school's work to keep students safe. A member of the governing body has specific responsibility for monitoring this area. Governors are kept informed of any issues that arise and know about improvements the school makes to its processes. For example, leaders have recently introduced a pastoral email address that enables all staff to rapidly communicate any safeguarding concerns as they arise. This system has already proven successful in helping leaders to reduce any potential risk to students. Although leaders constantly reflect on how systems can be improved, the governing body can do more to ensure that 'lessons learnt' are reviewed systematically.

Behaviour and safety

Students reported that most of the time they and their peers are polite, friendly and get along well together, irrespective of background. They are interested in learning and respectful to their teachers and each other. Typically, these attitudes and

positive behaviour improve as students grow and mature. Older students often act as positive role models. Even so, on occasions, students can be too chatty and lack focus in some lessons. Inspection evidence supports students' views. The number of students excluded from school for poor behaviour continues to be low.

Students say that they feel safe at school and are helped to stay safe, including when online, through lessons, assemblies and special events. They reported that there are few incidents of bullying and a range of trusted adults they can go to when problems arise. In most cases, they noted that bullying takes the form of unpleasant remarks or name calling. Your tracking shows that such incidents are generally isolated and are more common in Key Stage 3. Having reviewed the school's approach to anti-bullying, you have ensured that staff take a firmer line on what is unacceptable. Nevertheless, you recognise that more can be done to ensure that all students are sensitive to the potential harm that unkind language or 'banter' can have if, as one student put it, 'it goes too far and gets out of hand'.

Scrutiny of your records and my interviews with students indicate that racism is rare. Recent incidents are uncharacteristic and have been investigated fully. You are working positively with the police and with representatives from the local community to support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development and to emphasise rights and responsibilities. Your school's work on promoting equality and diversity is varied and includes assemblies focused on appropriate use of social media, cultural events and projects which challenge homophobia.

Over time, students' attendance has been broadly in line with the national average. However, recently, the proportion of students who find it hard to attend school regularly ('persistent absence') has increased. In addition, absence for some groups, notably students eligible for free school meals and some students with special educational needs or who are disabled, is above average for similar students nationally. Leaders are aware of this issue and can demonstrate how they are working with students and families to improve attendance. Nevertheless, more needs to be done to ensure that the attendance of these groups of students improves at a faster rate.

The curriculum is under constant review and there has been a recent audit focusing on SMSC development and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Staff with specific responsibilities in this area are ensuring that the curriculum provides students with challenging and relevant opportunities to learn about their place in modern British society and the wider world. For example, students talked with confidence about their work on politics and democracy during the recent election, their visit to a Hindu temple and their study of demanding topics linked to medical ethics, poverty and inequality, and challenging stereotypical views of Islam.

A recent school survey of parents indicates that 96% and 95% respectively feel that their children are happy and safe. In addition, 94% of parents felt that school dealt effectively with incidents of bullying. This supports the predominantly positive views of the students that I spoke to during the inspection.

I received eight emails from parents and spoke to one parent by telephone. Most comments were very positive about the school's work, particularly in relation to transition and safeguarding. One parent described communication with the school as 'first class' and another noted that their children had, after a difficult period at primary school, 'thrived' at Westgate. By contrast, another parent, although acknowledging that the school has improved its approach to anti-bullying, felt that communication between the school and home and between teachers in the school about such issues was ineffective. You and your staff welcome input from parents in helping you to continually improve your work in this area.

External support

You and your staff work collaboratively with the local authority. Staff liaise well with other agencies, including the police and social services. A senior leader from a partnership school is currently supporting the school to ensure that SMSC is well embedded across all areas of the curriculum. This work is in its early stages.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that the information the school collects on behaviour and attendance is used consistently to identify any patterns that exist across particular groups or cohorts of students.
- Ensure that governors and leaders more systematically review the 'lessons learnt' from any safeguarding issues that arise.

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

Yours sincerely

Christopher Wood
Her Majesty's Inspector