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9 December 2015

Mrs Gill Middlemas
Headteacher
Whitworth Community High School
Hallfold
Whitworth
Rochdale
Lancashire
OL12 8TS

Dear Mrs Middlemas

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Whitworth Community High School

Following my visit with Linda Griffiths, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 3 December 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

We met with you, the deputy headteacher, who has responsibility for child protection and safeguarding, the assistant headteacher who has responsibility for behaviour and attendance, the student welfare and safeguarding manager and the special educational needs coordinator. We met with two groups of pupils and a group of teachers. We also met with the Chair of the Governing Body, who has responsibility for safeguarding, and a parent governor. We scrutinised the single central record, attendance and exclusion records, logs of prejudice-based bullying incidents and other documents relating to safeguarding arrangements. We observed students during the morning break. We also considered the views of the 33 parents who had responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, alongside the school's own parental surveys.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

Context

Whitworth Community High School is much smaller than average and the majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged, and therefore supported by the pupil premium, is in line with the national average. The pupil premium is funding for those pupils who are eligible for free school meals and for children looked after by the local authority. The proportion of pupils who are disabled or identified as having special educational needs is higher than the national figure.

Leadership and management of safeguarding

The work the school does to keep its pupils safe is exemplary. The welfare and safeguarding of pupils are a very high priority for leaders and all staff. The strategic and operational leadership of this area is very strong. Robust protocols and practice exist within a very caring ethos that has the safety and welfare of each individual pupil at its heart. When challenging situations arise, staff in school possess the necessary skills to handle these effectively, ensuring that the needs of the most vulnerable pupils are met.

Procedures to ensure all staff have appropriate safeguarding training are rigorous. There are regular training sessions, updates and catch-up events as required. The group of staff spoken to during the inspection spoke of a culture of awareness and vigilance where pupils' welfare and safety are actively promoted. The training that staff have received has given them confidence to identify risk and know what procedures to employ to report their concerns.

The code of respect, upon which the culture at Whitworth is based, informs the way all pupils and staff conduct themselves. This is a school that values individuals, recognising that everyone is different but equal. This creates an environment in which pupils feel safe and comfortable. It also gives them confidence, for example to be open about their sexuality. While rightly proud of this, leaders are not resting on their laurels, and are now focusing on eradicating any use of derogatory language in school.

The pupils we spoke to during the inspection, particularly those in Years 10 and 11, are very positive and proud of their school. They demonstrate a deeply embedded respect for other people and value the way their education is preparing them for later life. They have high praise for the support they receive from staff and the opportunities they are given. One pupil described the school as 'really civilised', and another said, 'it feels like a big family'. They say that bullying is rare, and on the few occasions when it does occur they are confident that staff will sort it out quickly. The

ethos of the school fosters healthy debate, and it is into this context that the work to protect pupils from dangers related to e-safety, radicalisation and extremism is woven. There is a holistic approach to developing confident, respectful young people who are ready to take their place in adult society.

Leaders are keenly aware of the link between good attendance and effective safeguarding. They are proactive in their efforts to improve pupils' attendance, particularly those who are persistently absent. Case studies demonstrate the significant success of actions taken to improve the attendance of those pupils who are regularly absent from school.

The Chair of the Governing Body, who is also the safeguarding governor, is in frequent contact with you and other leaders. Along with other governors, she is often in school, visiting lessons and meeting with staff. This close working relationship enables governors to hold leaders to account for all aspects of school life, including safeguarding. At the time of the inspection, updated policies on safeguarding and behaviour were awaiting ratification at the full governing body meeting this month. Governors are now aware that they need to sharpen some of their systems; for example, how often they review policies and procedures, to ensure they are monitoring and evaluating the actions of leaders in a strategic way.

The responses of the 33 parents who responded to the online questionnaire are overwhelmingly positive, with 100% of them saying they would recommend this school to another parent. In a recent survey of parents of Year 7 pupils, 97% of those who had contacted school with a query or problem said that they had received a helpful response. Parental comments in the school's visitors' book are also extremely positive. They comment on how very welcoming the school is and on the professionalism of staff. The pastoral staff receive particularly high praise from parents.

External support

The local authority has a strong relationship with the school. The officer linked to the school has absolute confidence in you and your leaders, and feels that all aspects of safeguarding are carried out to a very high standard. You and your staff know that you can turn to the local authority for help and advice on any matters relating to safeguarding, and do so, as and when appropriate.

Priorities for further improvement

- Sharpen the governing body's systems and procedures for strategic monitoring and evaluation. This will enable governors to challenge and support leaders further in the good work they do in all aspects of safeguarding.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Seneviratne
Her Majesty's Inspector