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Mr Antonio Munoz-Bailey
Principal
Chaigeley School
Lymm Road
Thelwall
Warrington
Cheshire
WA4 2TE

Dear Mr Munoz-Bailey

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Chaigeley School

Following my visit with Pippa Jackson-Maitland, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 27 January 2016, 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 the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school (including governance), and the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements, and met with the Principal, the Chair of the Governing Body and the outreach and welfare manager. Inspectors also met with a representative of the local authority and the local community police officer. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the local authority's deputy designated officer for safeguarding.

Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at lunchtime. They spoke to pupils in their classes and over lunch. Inspectors also spoke to individual members of staff during these times. They took into consideration the 23 returns from the staff questionnaire and the 14 completed pupil questionnaires.

Inspectors also scrutinised additional documentation relating to safeguarding. This included the school's records of behaviour and bullying, records of the use of any physical restraints by staff, training records and staff recruitment files.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

Chaigeley School is a special school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. There are currently 35 pupils at the school. The residential provision at the school closed in September 2015; however, governors have submitted a proposal to the Department for Education to offer boarding provision for 52 weeks of the year.

This inspection was scheduled following the receipt of two complaints about the school. These complaints raised concerns about the welfare, health and safety of staff and pupils.

Main findings

This inspection found no evidence to substantiate the wider concerns raised by the complaints made to Ofsted.

Leaders work with external agencies extremely effectively to ensure that staff receive full training and support in order to identify any child protection concerns and to manage appropriately the behaviour of pupils. The school has established a close working relationship with the local community police officer. This ensures that the school rapidly secures any additional advice or support it may need in the event of a serious incident involving pupils.

Staff expressed full confidence in the leadership of the school and in their own abilities to manage pupils' behaviour. School records show that those incidents where staff need to intervene physically to support pupils have reduced. These detailed records also confirm that the behaviour of pupils is managed well by all adults at the school. However, some records at the school, such as those dealing with staff recruitment, are not as thoroughly maintained as they should be.

Levels of supervision are high. Staff work hard to establish positive relationships with pupils, and this underpins the positive environment for learning at the school. At times though, this does not allow pupils to be left to manage their own feelings and relationships with each other.

Leaders have established an outreach programme for pupils who have trouble in accessing the more formalised education at the school, or for those new pupils who need a gradual integration into the school. Teachers welcome this approach. It is also starting to have a positive impact on pupils' safety and well-being. It ensures that those pupils who have been absent from education for a long time start to re-engage with learning. The school's approach is also starting to reduce the number of pupils who experience periods of short-term exclusion.

Those staff who spoke to inspectors and who answered the inspection questionnaire all agreed that leadership was good at the school, that the school was improving and that they felt supported in their roles. They all stated that pupils were safe. Those pupils who spoke to inspectors confirmed this. There was no evidence that pupils fail to respect school property. The school environment is pleasant, well decorated and maintained. There are no graffiti and pupils usually keep their work tidy in their books.

During the inspection, older pupils listened attentively to an assembly about the Holocaust and about the oppression of groups of people around the world today. They demonstrated sensitivity and respect for the experiences of others.

Governors are highly committed to the future of the school and to ensuring that staff and pupils are safe. They have established this priority as everyone's responsibility. Governors have invested in additional resources to support staff and pupil well-being, most notably in a specialist therapeutic service at the school. Staff and pupils access this as and when they need to. Records show that this has had a direct impact on helping staff to anticipate pupils' emotional needs more effectively. However, a few pupils still spoke of their worries about leaving this close-knit community and how they were going to manage after Year 11.

External support

School leaders access additional support from senior local authority advisers and from other external agencies. The Principal and governors are keen to understand how they can improve the school further and have secured the advice of an external adviser in order to facilitate this improvement. Her first review of the school has been scheduled following this inspection, so it is not yet possible to evaluate the impact of this support.

Priorities for further improvement

- Leaders should improve their monitoring of the school's safeguarding arrangements to ensure that all record-keeping is thorough and follows school policies.
- Staff should build greater opportunities for pupils to regulate their own behaviour and relationships with each other.
- Leaders should establish a comprehensive programme of guidance for pupils to ensure they feel well supported as they prepare to move on to the next stage in their education or training.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Warrington. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Philippa Darley
Her Majesty's Inspector