

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
www.ofsted.gov.uk



20 October 2015

Mr Tony Taylor  
Ridgeway High School  
Noctorum Avenue  
Noctorum  
Prenton  
Merseyside  
CH43 9EB

Dear Mr Taylor

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Ridgeway High School**

Following my visit to your school on 30 September 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 deputy headteacher, who has responsibility for child protection and safeguarding, the safeguarding and attendance officer and the special educational needs coordinator. I met with two groups of students, a group of teachers, and pastoral support leaders. I also met with the Chair of the Governing Body, the governor who has responsibility for safeguarding, who is also the vice-chair, and two representatives from the local authority. I scrutinised the single central record, attendance and exclusion records, logs of prejudice-based bullying incidents and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. I observed students during the morning break. I also considered the views of the small number of parents (11) who had responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View.

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

## **Context**

Ridgeway High School is smaller than average and the majority of students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students who are disadvantaged, and therefore supported by the pupil premium, is higher than the national average. The pupil premium is funding for those students who are eligible for free school meals and for children looked after by the local authority. The proportion of students who are disabled or identified as having special educational needs is also higher than the national figure. Two assistant headteachers left the school at the end of the last academic year. As a result, the present senior leadership team is small, comprising the headteacher, one deputy headteacher and one assistant headteacher.

## **Leadership and management of safeguarding**

From the start of this academic year, the designated person and strategic lead for safeguarding has been the deputy headteacher. She works very closely with the safeguarding and attendance officer, who leads this work on an operational level in the school. The safeguarding and attendance officer has the appropriate knowledge, skills and expertise to carry out her role effectively, and she maintains detailed records of her actions. She works closely with the pastoral support leaders for each key stage. This reflects the teamwork approach that exists across the school, in the way that staff work to keep students safe. Effective communication systems exist both within school and with outside agencies. Leaders seek appropriate support and advice from the local authority designated officer when safeguarding concerns necessitate referral.

There is clear evidence that the governors have safeguarding as a very high priority. Working closely with the headteacher, they took swift and decisive action last year when it became apparent that there were concerns about the leadership of this area. The safeguarding policy was discussed and adopted at the first full governing body meeting at the start of this academic year. The governor with responsibility for safeguarding has a great deal of expertise in this area and carries out her role in a proactive and effective manner. The governing body ensures that the single central record is complete, and that adults employed by the school to work with children and young people are appropriately vetted.

The small group of teachers I spoke to during the inspection, including one who had just started in September, feel confident that they know the appropriate safeguarding procedures and protocols. They understand the important role they play in keeping students safe. They have all completed the safeguarding online training. Although they all have a copy of the Department for Education document 'Keeping Children Safe in Education', they recognised that they had not spent time reading it and reflecting on how it affects their own practice.

The students I spoke to feel very comfortable talking to staff in school, particularly the pastoral support leaders, about any issues which concern them. They feel that any incidents of bullying are usually dealt with effectively. However, they identify that, on occasions, it takes too long for incidents to be resolved. One Key Stage 3 student said, 'sometimes it's not taken seriously enough'. Both staff and students feel that the school is a safe place to be open about one's sexuality and that people are respected for who they are. However, somewhat at odds with this is the prevalence of the use of the word 'gay' in a derogatory manner, or as a term of abuse. Students say that, if staff hear this, it is usually challenged. They remember having an assembly about why homophobic language is unacceptable, but the fact that it still prevails suggests that leaders have not provided sufficient opportunities for students to reflect on how their knowledge affects their attitudes and behaviour. Although the school keeps logs of incidents of prejudice-based bullying, they lack enough detail to be fully effective. They do not include sufficient detail to enable effective monitoring and evaluation to take place. Leaders are also aware that behaviour information, particularly exclusion data, is not recorded effectively enough to monitor the impact that exclusion has on the safety of particular groups of students.

Students behave well during breaktimes. Whether socialising inside or outside, their behaviour is mature and calm. Safety is paramount during this time of the day and there are numerous staff on duty around the school site, wearing high-visibility vests. Staff use this time effectively to engage with students and there is clear evidence of positive relationships.

Leaders are keenly aware of the link between good attendance and effective safeguarding. They are proactive in their efforts to improve students' attendance, particularly those who are persistently absent. The school uses a first day of absence parental text scheme. If no response is received then staff carry out a home visit. Actions taken have led to a significant reduction in the number of students who are persistently absent but leaders are well aware that improvement is still required here, particularly for disadvantaged students.

Only a very small number of parents responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View. While just over half of these responses are positive, other parents have concerns about behaviour and bullying in the school, and how this is managed. This is clearly a very small sample, but suggests that leaders are not always effective in the way they are working with parents concerning these issues.

### **External support**

The local authority has a strong relationship with the school and works closely with it on all aspects of safeguarding. The headteacher consults appropriately with the local authority designated officer, who describes his approach to safeguarding as 'keen and proactive'. The school actively participates in local authority safeguarding training, and the officers describe staff as very open and keen to heed any advice that is offered.

## **Priorities for further improvement**

- Ensure that all information about behaviour, such as exclusion data and records relating to prejudice-based bullying, is sufficiently detailed to enable effective monitoring and evaluation.
- Improve strategies to eradicate students' use of homophobic language.
- Ensure that all incidents of bullying are resolved as quickly as possible.
- Improve strategies to ensure that all parents feel that their children are safe and happy in school.
- Ensure that time is made available for all staff to read 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' and reflect on how this document impacts on their own practice.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Wirral, 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

Anne Seneviratne  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**