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Mrs Rebecca Leonard
Head of Centre
Youth Challenge
Smithills Dean Road
Bolton
Lancashire
BL1 6JT

Dear Mrs Leonard

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Youth Challenge PRU

Following my visit to your school on 8 October 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

The inspector scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. He met with the head of centre, other members of the leadership team, students, teachers, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.

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

The school's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

Context

The Youth Challenge is part of the Pupil Referral Unit in Bolton. The school currently has 66 boys and girls on roll aged between 11 and 16, along with 16 pupils in its Key Stage 2 provision. Of these pupils, seven are from minority ethnic groups and have a language other than English as their first language. A very high proportion of pupils

are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs is above average. Approximately three quarters of the pupils have been on roll at the school for less than a year, with about one half being on roll for less than a term. Pupils are placed at the school either because they have been permanently excluded or as an alternative to permanent exclusion. Pupils in the Key Stage 2 provision attend the school for two days each week and return to their home school for the other three days.

A Management Committee has responsibility for the governance of the Pupil Referral Unit in Bolton. A link governor for the school (referred to as the Chair of the Governing Body below) works with leaders and managers of the school and, in turn, reports to the Management Committee.

Context

Governors have ensured the provision for the safety of pupils is well led. The head of centre has been appointed as the Designated Senior Leader for safeguarding. Two additional senior leaders, along with the Chair of the Governing Body, have been trained to an equally high level in the safeguarding of children. However, there is a need to update the school's safeguarding policy so that it reflects accurately the school's work to keep children safe.

Leaders are effective in ensuring pupils are kept safe in school and while attending alternative provisions. The school's own surveys show that parents feel their children are safe in school and also that pupils themselves feel safe. The pupils to whom the inspector spoke said they feel safe because of the high number of staff in school 'who will listen and do something about it' if they have a concern.

Every pupil has a key worker with whom they meet frequently. Pupils said they were confident that they can talk to their key worker if they have a concern. The pupils were also able to name a number of other people, including leaders, to whom they can turn if their key worker is unavailable. However, the school's complaints procedure, published on its website, is cumbersome and well beyond the set review date. This policy does not meet the needs of the school or its pupils and parents.

Training for all staff in how to keep pupils safe is appropriate. Recent training for all staff, delivered by the local authority's safeguarding team, included an introduction into how to keep pupils safe from extremism and radicalisation. The teachers who spoke with the inspector have a good awareness of the signs and symptoms of various forms of child abuse and neglect. The teachers also know to whom they report any safeguarding concerns that they may have.

The school's records show that all staff have been trained adequately in how to manage pupils' behaviour. Serious incidents which involve physical intervention to manage pupils' behaviour are recorded appropriately. Leaders scrutinise every report

of a physical intervention and take swift and effective action if there is a need to strengthen practice.

Leaders make effective use of the information they have about pupils to support their strategies to keep pupils safe. For example, information gathered by the Outreach Team during home visits before a pupil starts at the school is used well by leaders to identify those who may be at risk of harm. In particular, vulnerable pupils are supported by a support plan that is designed to match their personal needs.

The school's records show that leaders act speedily to ensure that appropriate professionals are made aware of the particular vulnerabilities of each pupil. Evidence in files demonstrates that leaders leave no stone unturned in their endeavours to keep students safe. However, records of meetings indicate that the Management Committee and governors do not hold leaders to account methodically with regards to safeguarding.

Leaders have robust systems in place to ensure they know the whereabouts and welfare of pupils who have poor attendance. For example, reports from the Behaviour and Attendance Team, and also the Distance Learning Team, are used to inform leaders' evaluation of the welfare of pupils who are not attending school.

Pupils are taught well how to keep themselves safe. Students taking part in vocational subjects receive a health and safety induction which includes practical guidance in using equipment safely. In personal, social and health education lessons, pupils discuss topics such as bullying, health and personal hygiene and cyberbullying. While in English lessons, students have been taught about the impact of racism on life in modern Britain. However, there is a risk that key messages about personal safety may be missed by some students because the curriculum policy is not robust enough.

External support

Leaders make good use of a wide range of support from beyond the school. Leaders' records show that agencies, such as the Youth Offending Team, Runner Project, 360 Drugs Team, School Nursing Team and Social Care, work in partnership with the school to provide an appropriate safeguarding system which meets the specific needs of pupils.

Priorities for further improvement

- Review the safeguarding policy so that it encapsulates fully the work of the school to keep children safe.
- Develop and improve the curriculum policy by including an overview of precisely where and when students will be taught how to keep themselves safe.
- Raise the accountability of safeguarding further by ensuring safeguarding is a standard agenda item in all meetings of the management committee and governing body.
- Ensure all pupils and their parents have access to the school's complaints policy, in a format appropriate to their specific needs, which states precisely how they can raise their concerns or make a complaint.

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

Yours sincerely

Drew Crawshaw
Her Majesty's Inspector