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Mr N Pattinson
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Dear Mr Pattinson

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Ullswater Community College

Following my visit with Bernard Robinson, Ofsted inspector, to the school on 13–14 September 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 and personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils at the school. These concerns were triggered by two parental complaints regarding safeguarding. This inspection was unannounced, which means that inspectors arrived at the school without previously notifying the school.

Evidence

We scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements, including case files and school policies and procedures. We met with a range of staff and leaders, including a group of newly qualified teachers, staff in charge of online safety and filtering arrangements, the headteacher and other senior leaders. We met formally with four groups of pupils and informally with pupils before school and at social times. We took into account 138 parent responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online survey) from the past because there were not enough responses from the last year.

Inspectors met with three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. We looked at procedures at the beginning and the end of the day for pupils coming onto and leaving the site, at transitions between lessons and at pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school. Inspectors scrutinised behaviour logs, attendance and exclusion information and a range of other documents relating to the curriculum.

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

Safeguarding is effective but I have concerns regarding the security of the school site.

Context

Ullswater is larger than the average-sized secondary school. Penrith has a selective system in the secondary schools so the overwhelming majority of pupils were not selected by the local grammar school. The overwhelming majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is much lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of educational needs or an education, health and care plan is over twice the national average. The school has specially resourced provision for pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties and disabilities.

The school met the government's floor standards in 2014 and 2015, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. There is very low mobility of pupils who change schools part-way through their education. The school has a large sixth form on site.

The governing body has no difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff.

The school makes use of the pupil referral unit in Carlisle and the Kingmoor Assessment Centre and the Gillford Centre in Carlisle for a few of its pupils. It also makes use of the hospital and home tuition service.

Inspection findings

The main issue for improvement is the security of the school's site. Adults, including staff, parents and other members of the public, and pupils do not demonstrate a good level of vigilance regarding pupils' safety on the site. It is too easy for delivery drivers, staff and members of the public to gain access to the grounds and to drive their vehicles into areas frequented by pupils and students. A gate at the top of the site was open on the first day of inspection, allowing vehicles to be driven onto the site at the same time as pupils and staff walked along the centre of the road. Several times on the first day of inspection pupils had to stop themselves to make way for cars and vans coming into the heart of the school. Parents, carers and visitors drive into the school while pupils are spread across the car parks and school grounds, often dodging the moving vehicles as they move to or between classes. The pupils are aware of the vehicles and it is only because they are mature and sensible most of the time that there have been no collisions.

At the start and the end of the day, staff marshal effectively some of the arriving buses and taxis carrying pupils, particularly those pupils with a disability. Senior leaders have mitigated some of the risks of the site security by installing closed-

circuit cameras in almost all areas to monitor and patrol areas around the school, and speed bumps to slow traffic. They have also ensured that a large number of staff patrol the grounds. Leaders took action quickly on the first day to improve the flow of pupils and vehicles.

Next to the school is a public right of way. This means the public from the leisure centre or the skateboarding park are in close proximity to pupils, particularly at break and lunchtimes and between lessons. It also means pupils have easy and quick access to public places. This right of way hampers the leaders' ability to maintain security of the school site. More needs to be done urgently to ensure that the public cannot access classrooms and other buildings without being challenged and to ensure that back doors to classrooms remain closed and inaccessible to the public.

Governors should undertake or commission a review into the school's health and safety systems and then review health and safety at least annually.

The pupils and students in the sixth form with whom inspectors spoke said that they feel safe, protected and they are given the skills and knowledge through the curriculum to know how to keep themselves safe. They referred in particular to visitors and assemblies which have had an impact on their thinking regarding safety online, safety around railways and reservoirs, and safety in relationships. Pupils, for example, felt they are well taught how to be respectful in relationships, about the concept of consent, and about some of the dangers surrounding body image and pornography. The curriculum is well developed to provide a good grounding in most aspects of personal safety. There is still some more work to do to extend the notion of extremism and how to avoid being drawn into extremist ideology.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe from bullying because all staff take issues seriously and there is someone they can speak with if they have any problems. There is a good system in place to prevent most types of bullying, intimidation and harassment. There are, according to the bullying logs and pupils, over the year, some recorded instances of bullying, and these often relate to name-calling or verbal abuse. Pupils said that name-calling is a problem, particularly over the use of names relating to a person's appearance. They also commented that some pupils use the term 'gay' as a derogative term. Staff record, in the behaviour logs, records of racism but there is no log of different types of name-calling. Leaders take proactive and responsive action to main good order and conduct around the school. The recent ban on mobile telephones, for example, has helped to maintain safety and good behaviour.

The policies on the school's website, in relation to equalities, do not meet statutory requirements. They do not cover each of the protected characteristics identified by government in the Equality Act 2010. The content of the policies regarding aspects of sexuality and transgender do not meet the requirements of the public sector equality duty or the government's requirements regarding British values. The

school's procedures, as well as its culture and ethos, are much better than the quality of the online policies suggests. Pupils and students from different backgrounds, such as those who have different faiths or no faith, those who are transgender, those with different sexualities, those with a disability or those from different racial heritages are welcome and fully included into school life. Pupils confirmed that any of these groups would be safe in school.

The school's website does not meet statutory requirements. The pupil premium strategy is missing, the school's offer of its provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities does not meet requirements and there is no information about the use of external funding for pupils in Year 7 to catch up. The governing body does not have a clear enough view of what the school's policies should contain and they do not have a good enough system to check on whether the website and policies comply with government requirements. Leaders have not made sure that all policies and procedures have been updated ready for September 2016.

The large majority of parents who have expressed their views in the past to Ofsted, through Parent View, would recommend the school to others, and agree that behaviour is managed well, leadership and management are effective and any incidents of bullying are dealt with appropriately.

The proportion of pupils excluded by the school because of behaviour is low. A relatively high proportion of the exclusions, however, involve pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, or pupils who are disadvantaged. The exclusions are for valid and appropriate reasons, such as for verbal assaults against adults or pupils or a few physical assaults against pupils. Senior leaders follow, closely and accurately, the guidelines set out by the Department for Education and the local authority.

Pupils told inspectors that most of the time, in most lessons and subjects, behaviour is good and they can concentrate on their work. In particular, the students in the sixth form praised the attitude to learning of other students. During the inspection most pupils were busy and on task and responsive to teachers' and other adults' requests, for example to tuck their shirts in. Some pupils waste time and lack a sense of urgency as they amble between classrooms when they change lessons. Senior leaders monitor classrooms and corridors frequently to check on good order and discipline.

There has been a three-year increase in attendance up to 2015. In the 2015/16 academic year, however, the difference between the absence of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally grew significantly. The absence of lower-attaining disadvantaged pupils was high. In part, the low attendance was due to a small number of pupils with significant health needs and with mental health concerns such as anxiety about coming to school.

Inspectors' reviews of case files indicate that staff identify any concerns about child protection or safeguarding as early as possible and treat any allegations seriously. This early identification is occasionally hampered by a lack of information from primary schools at the start of Year 7. Some staff in Year 7 had to respond very quickly to issues at the start of the year because they had not been warned by the primary school of some significant concerns.

The leadership of child protection is very good. Leaders are persistent and tenacious when following up cases where other agencies have not been quick enough to respond or take action. The staff share information widely with other agencies but its impact is occasionally hindered, the files indicate, by local authority staff not attending meetings. Similarly they are hindered when there is slow referral to, or meetings with, children's mental health services. There is appropriate support, information and guidance from the school for families and for pupils who may have significant needs such as suicidal thoughts, depression or who have been bereaved. The school follows correct guidelines when there is police involvement or other specialist services.

The school roll includes a number of children who are looked after and some who have been fostered or adopted. The personal educational plans for these pupils are appropriate and the support they receive has a positive impact. The attendance of this group of pupils is high and most are on course to achieve their academic targets. The monitoring of this group by leaders is thorough. No annual report is written by the designated teacher, however.

Procedures to check on the appropriateness of staff, governors and volunteers to work with pupils are thorough and meet recently amended requirements, indicating that the team of staff keep abreast of national changes and developments. The senior leaders take action when there is any concern or allegation against a member of staff. The number of referrals to the local authority citing concerns is low.

External support

The advice, information, support and guidance from the local authority has enabled the school leaders to check that they are following national procedures for exclusion, attendance, behaviour and for out-of-school provision. The hospital and home tuition service has provided tutors and qualified teachers to visit pupils in their home, particularly those who are anxious about coming into school. This has made sure that few pupils drop out of education and that they instead transfer into employment, training or further education at the end of Year 11.

Senior leaders and staff from Ullswater are providing support to Netherhall Secondary School.

Priorities for further improvement

- Urgently review the school's health and safety procedures and risk assessments.
- Take immediate action to make sure that vehicles cannot access the school at the same time and in the same place as pupils.
- Take action to secure the school building from being accessed by the public.
- Reduce name-calling, particularly that based on how someone looks and when using the term 'gay' in a derogatory way.
- Ensure that the school's website meets the government's current requirements on what must be published online, and that the governing body checks regularly to make sure policies and ensure that the website meet requirements.
- Increase the attendance of pupils who are disadvantaged.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cumbria. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr
Her Majesty's Inspector