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Linda Halbert
Principal
Thornaby Academy
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Dear Mrs Halbert

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Thornaby Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 31 January 2017, 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 scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. I also met with senior leaders, safeguarding and behaviour leaders and the chair and safeguarding lead for the Teesside Learning Trust. I also talked to a safeguarding consultant who had reviewed safeguarding practices at the school. I also held a meeting with a group of pupils from Years 9 to 11 and talked to pupils in lessons. I carried out a learning walk with the principal and observed an assembly.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

Thornaby Academy is much smaller than the average secondary school. The vast majority of pupils are White British with a very small proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. The school has an additionally resourced provision for 12 pupils from across the borough with autism. A very small number of pupils access alternative provision.

The school has undergone significant staffing changes since the section 5 inspection in June 2016. The acting principal, vice-principal and director of behaviour and attendance in post at the last inspection have left the school. The chief executive of the Teesside Learning Trust took direct control of the headteacher's responsibilities on 1 September 2016 and has subsequently been joined by a new head of school and new assistant principal. A new safeguarding team is now in place and the assistant principal has overall responsibility for behaviour and attendance. The school has received additional safeguarding reviews and training from external consultants and the safeguarding lead for the Teesside Learning Trust. The academy has experienced some challenges in recruiting specialist mathematics teachers.

There have been considerable changes to governance. The academy has been re-brokered from 1 September 2016 under the leadership of the Teesside Learning Trust. The previous governing body resigned after the section 5 inspection of June 2016. The Teesside Learning Trust is now directly undertaking responsibilities for governance.

Main findings

New leaders have worked strenuously to rectify the ineffectiveness of safeguarding identified at the section 5 inspection in June 2016. Leaders have developed a visible safeguarding culture where heightened awareness of pupil welfare permeates many aspects of school life. The chief executive and senior leaders have ensured that all staff, from teachers to kitchen staff to site staff, are involved in safeguarding training as safeguarding is now a key responsibility of every adult at the school. Leaders have established a new safeguarding team so that the designated safeguarding leads work closely with pastoral leaders to develop a cohesive overview of pupils' welfare needs. Although significant progress has been made in a short period of time, further action is needed to embed new systems and implement them in a consistent manner.

Leadership capacity has been considerably strengthened. The chief executive has brought in key staff from the learning trust to provide expertise and strategic and operational support. In addition, existing pastoral staff have been given clearer responsibilities for monitoring behaviour and attendance. Thorough reviews of

safeguarding practice have taken place and these have informed significant changes. While practical action has been taken to fortify procedures, at a deeper level the chief executive has sought to build a stronger ethos with training designed to raise everyone's understanding of safeguarding and their own responsibilities for managing pupils' behaviour. Staff training is now regularly updated.

In discussions with staff, they demonstrated a strong awareness of safeguarding procedures and a good knowledge of the factors that would trigger their concerns over the welfare of a child. All staff briefings include regular safeguarding updates, emphasising its heightened importance at all levels.

Members of the Teesside Learning Trust have taken direct responsibility for governance while the school remains in special measures. The chair of the trust has participated in some of the early diagnostic training to assess the school's current position and target key areas for improvement. Key policies have been reviewed and updated to align them with others in the trust. The trust's human resources officer carries out appropriate checks on all adults working on site and all trust members. A number of trust members are trained in safer recruitment. Key trust members meet regularly to review the school's progress and check that practices remain safe.

The school safeguarding team has been expanded. The assistant principal and the special educational needs coordinator are both fully trained as designated safeguarding leads. In addition, pastoral leaders are also in the process of undergoing full child protection training. These changes are a direct response to the recommendations of a recent safeguarding review to create a more cohesive team drawing on the expertise and knowledge of pastoral leaders who have an in-depth knowledge of pupils' needs. During the inspection, there was evidence of clear procedures for referring concerns over children's welfare. New computerised systems for logging safeguarding concerns are leading to more effective record-keeping, although some records are less detailed than others. Systems are in place to support online security.

Behavioural systems have been standardised and staff have received training on implementing a more graduated response to manage behaviour, rather than removing a pupil from class at the first instance. Staff are also developing more positive responses to behaviour management, with a heightened use of praise and rewards to recognise good behaviour. In discussion, pupils stated that behaviour at school was better and that the new system of rewards was encouraging more positive attitudes. However, staff do not feel that the modified consequence system is being used consistently by all staff, with some teachers still too keen to remove pupils swiftly from their class. Pupils' main concerns were the levels of staff change that had led to difficulties developing relationships with staff.

Behaviour on site has improved. Staff value the heightened visibility of senior leaders in encouraging positive behaviour across the site and raising the profile of

day-to-day safety. September to December 2016 saw an initial increase in fixed-term exclusions as new leaders imposed higher behavioural expectations. There are some signs that these are now beginning to decrease. The use of internal school exclusion is showing some decline and there has been a significant improvement in the awarding of positive reward points.

Attendance monitoring procedures are now robust and accurate. Overall attendance levels remain below average but clear systems are in place for checking attendance, particularly for more vulnerable pupils. One of the key concerns at the last inspection involved improving the attendance of pupils involved in alternative placements. The school's use of such placements has significantly reduced, with only three pupils currently involved. There is clear evidence that the attendance of these pupils is checked and any concerns swiftly addressed.

Leaders have strengthened the curriculum to actively raise staff and pupils' awareness of key equalities. Pupils and teachers have developed a set of values based on mutual respect. All pupils have taken part in training to recognise the importance of respecting differing sexual orientations. Pupils commissioned and designed a series of posters around the school site to reinforce this message. In addition, pupils have addressed anti-bullying issues and revisited strategies to stay safe online. The revised curriculum has already addressed a number of key safeguarding issues, including sexual relationships, unhealthy relationships, mental health and rights and responsibilities. The subsequent production of posters and tutor group displays lends an added permanence to these curriculum developments.

External support

The school has commissioned reviews of safeguarding from a specialist consultant who previously acted as adviser for the NSPCC. Her diagnostic review has informed the subsequent training and improvement plan. The safeguarding consultant for the trust has provided direct training for all staff. The school has worked with a number of partners to build more positive learning behaviours and relationships. Partner organisations have worked directly with pupils to build self-awareness and self-esteem, along with more positive attitudes to behaviour and learning. The local anti-social behaviour team have worked with pupils on restorative practice and given them clear insights in to the consequences of particular types of anti-social behaviour. The school continues to work closely with children's social care.

Priorities for further improvement

- Embed new behavioural systems more consistently across the school
- Continue to intensify actions to build a stable and secure environment that supports positive learning behaviours
- Reduce the rates of fixed-term exclusion

- Improve attendance so that pupils are not vulnerable as a result of their absence from school.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Kirtley
Her Majesty's Inspector