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15 March 2017

Mr Stephen Munday  
Headteacher  
William Edwards School  
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RM16 3NJ

Dear Mr Munday

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of William Edwards School**

Following my visit with Simon Webb, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 1 March 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, aspects of the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school (including governance), and the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils at the school.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements, and met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, groups of pupils and a member of the governing body.

Inspectors also looked at logs relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance, governors' minutes of meetings, school policies and records of formal complaints made about the school, and visited a number of lessons briefly across a range of subjects in order to observe pupils' attitudes towards their learning.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. All staff have received up-to-date training in the safeguarding of children and in the government's 'Prevent' duty, which aims to deter young people from being drawn into extremist activity. Any administrative flaws in the school's single central record of recruitment checks of staff were rectified during the inspection. The school site is safe and secure, and the high number of closed-circuit television cameras contributes towards this. The school's curriculum provides effective support for pupils at risk. For example, it addresses topical issues which might affect young people, including body image, and eating and anxiety disorders. Although not made use of as yet, there is also a direct email which pupils can use to contact the school where their anonymity is guaranteed. The few pupils who attend any alternative off-site provision are also monitored closely to ensure that they attend regularly, achieve well and are kept safe.

### **Context**

The number of pupils on roll is 1,199. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is low. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. A below-average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is average. Staff turnover is low, and although the school faces challenges in the recruitment of staff due to its location, it is fully staffed.

The school's senior leaders work very well together as a cohesive team who know and execute their roles and responsibilities effectively. The school's leadership structure has empowered pastoral leaders to demonstrate their impact and they know individual pupils well. Hence, parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, rightly believe that their children are well looked after in the school.

The school receives few complaints which are processed at more formal stages, but when they do, these are processed efficiently, and in accordance with the school's complaints policy. Inspectors' scrutiny of the school's complaints records shows that when the school makes a mistake, it acknowledges this to be the case. Records of complaints are well maintained and show the actions taken by the school in chronological order.

Systems for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the work of the school are well established and include staff at all levels as well as members of the governing body. This gives everyone ownership of whole-school strategic planning. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses overall. Between them, governors have a comprehensive range of skills which they put to effective use. However, scrutiny of meetings of the governing body show that further action is needed to investigate more closely why some groups of pupils attend school less regularly than others, particularly those pupils who are eligible for free school meals. Governors must also ensure that the school's website is compliant with current requirements and that reviews of school policies are up to date.

The curriculum is well considered and planned to meet the needs of the pupils in the school. It is particularly effective in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Careers information and guidance are of good quality and encourage pupils, whatever their background, to aim high. Displays around the school celebrate pupils' diversity and their achievements.

Pupils' overall attendance has been broadly in line with the national average for some time and has steadily improved over time. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is well below the national average. This is due in no uncertain terms to the introduction of the evening telephone call system which aims to address unauthorised absences so that pupils report to school the following day. The school's leaders have also adopted a strategic approach towards improving attendance. For example, they have introduced a two-week October half-term holiday to give parents a wider window in which to take their children on holiday. Additionally, on the last day of the term, the school stages high-profile events to encourage pupils to attend, including practice examinations or mock interviews. The attendance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals, despite a slight improvement, remains below that of other pupils nationally.

Pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons and when moving around the school. They wear their uniform smartly. Pupils respect their teachers and one another. The school's list of 'William Edwards expectations', displayed in every classroom and around the school, makes clear what is expected of both pupils and their teachers, and this agreement ensures that relationships are consistently positive. The proportion of fixed-term exclusions has fallen over time due to teachers' high expectations and their appropriate use of the school's internal exclusion facility.

Incidents of bullying are rare, and bullying is taken very seriously when it does occur. Indeed, pupils say they feel safe when in school and during their journey to and from the school. No incidents of racist or homophobic bullying are recorded in the school's behaviour logs. The school teaches pupils well about how to keep themselves safe. They are well prepared for the digital age and the risks associated with using social networking sites. Guest speakers, as well as the use of form time and personal, social, health and economic education ensure that pupils use

information and communication technology wisely. Pupils told inspectors: 'It's ok to be different in this school.' The school promotes equalities well through its lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender society which is attended by pupils in the school.

Pupils' own leadership skills are developed well through the availability of various roles and responsibilities. The 'student executive' is a very effective tool for pupils to express their views on the school and is a role to which many pupils aspire. Equally, pupils are keen to become 'PALS' (pupils as listeners) in order to offer support to their peers who need help. These pupils are offered high-quality training in listening, recording and reporting skills.

### **External support**

The school maintains a positive working relationship with the local authority. The management and use of the pupil premium funding has been reviewed externally. Support and challenge are provided regularly by the South West Essex Community Education Trust. Most recently, the trust commissioned a review of the school's safeguarding procedures which was led by the headteacher of one of the trust's primary providers.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Improve the attendance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals through more focused monitoring and more robust challenge by members of the governing body.
- Ensure that the school's website is fully compliant with current requirements.
- Make sure that school policies are updated by the deadline identified in the governors' schedule.

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

Yours sincerely

John Daniell  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**