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18 May 2017

Miss Amanda Simpson
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Simpson

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Lea Manor High School and Performing Arts College.

Following my visit with Christine Dick, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 26 April 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 and the personal development and welfare of pupils at the school.

During the inspection, inspectors were made aware that serious allegations of a child protection nature are being investigated by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate individual concerns, the school's response to these allegations was considered alongside other evidence available.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the school's single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding, child protection arrangements and pupils' attendance and behaviour. Inspectors met with you, other senior and middle leaders, a group of seven teachers, a group of eight learning support assistants, three groups of pupils, individual members of staff and the chair of the governing body. An inspector also held a telephone discussion with a representative of the local authority.

Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour when arriving at school, in lessons, at lunchtimes and when leaving at the end of the school day. Inspectors also held informal discussions with pupils, both in lessons and when walking around the school site.

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

Safeguarding is effective. Leaders and managers are taking effective action to ensure that pupils' personal development and welfare are appropriately provided for.

Context

Lea Manor High School and Performing Arts College is a large 11–16 secondary school. Education is provided for 1,124 pupils. The school population includes higher than average proportions of disadvantaged pupils and pupils from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than the national average. The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average. There is a higher than average proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan. Pupils enter the school with attainment that is significantly below that of their peers nationally.

In recent years, the school has experienced considerable difficulty in recruiting suitably qualified teachers in subjects such as science, mathematics and physical education. Despite your tireless work and that of your senior team, several teaching posts remain unfilled by suitably qualified full-time, permanent teaching staff.

Ofsted was made aware of concerns regarding the school's safeguarding systems, including those relating to pupils' personal development, behaviour and well-being. Consequently, this inspection focused on the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements and the impact of leaders' work to improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare.

Main findings

You and your governors have ensured that there is a transparent, robust culture of safeguarding at Lea Manor High School and Performing Arts College. Leaders, including governors, have a relentless focus upon ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils, in particular those who are vulnerable or at risk.

You ensure that teachers and support staff receive regular, appropriate safeguarding training, including in relation to their duties linked to the government's 'Prevent' agenda. This training includes content that is appropriate for the local context of the school. Adults inspectors spoke with were alert to their responsibilities regarding safeguarding. They rightly consider ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils as one of their primary daily duties. There is a clear understanding that 'nothing is too trivial' to report. Teachers and learning support assistants recognise the signs that indicate when a pupil may be at risk. They know what action to take if they have any concerns. Staff told inspectors that designated child protection staff act swiftly on any issues that are reported. Inspection evidence, including school records and a discussion with a representative from the local authority, indicates that concerns and complaints are appropriately referred to

the relevant authorities. Carefully maintained child protection files demonstrate that pupils in need of support are provided with it in a timely, proportionate manner. You ensure that there are effective strategies in place to monitor the attendance and well-being of these pupils.

The governors perform their statutory duty well in holding you to account for the safeguarding of pupils. The governing body ensures that relevant safeguarding policies are up to date and compliant with the most recent national guidance. Governors regularly monitor the records that the school keeps related to staff recruitment. They ensure that the statutory checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school are accurate, up to date and well kept. Evidence from minutes of meetings demonstrates that governors regularly ask for, receive and discuss detailed safeguarding reports.

The governing body has supported you in making appropriate improvements to the modern school premises. Lea Manor shares its site with an adult education centre, library, children's centre and sporting facility. You have invested in additional external fencing and secure doors in the school's reception and atrium area. There is no longer open access from public facilities directly into areas in which pupils learn within the school buildings. Pupils told inspectors that they welcomed the presence of 'staff on every corner' as this adds to their sense of security. With the support of the local authority, further improvements to the site are under way. You agree that work to complete these improvements needs to be accelerated.

Pupils explained that they feel safe at Lea Manor High School and Performing Arts College. They confidently talked about strategies they would use to stay safe online. Older pupils work together with school staff in planning and delivering age-appropriate presentations to younger pupils. These aim to heighten pupils' awareness of the risks to their personal safety that exist in modern society. Pupils have a clear understanding about bullying and the various forms that it can take. They explained that while incidents of bullying occur, when they are reported, adults deal with them appropriately and effectively. Impressively, you have trained 40 pupils as anti-bullying ambassadors. School prefects are also aware of their role in supporting pupils who may have concerns. A small number of pupils told inspectors that they would welcome even more avenues through which they could report incidents of concern.

You aim to educate pupils about the diversity of their school and wider community. The colourful displays around the school reflect the breadth of cultures and faiths that pupils study, and pupils are encouraged to make a positive contribution to their local community. For example, pupils have successfully raised funds for local charities by participating in the First Give project. Through the school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme pupils are provided with the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about their lifestyle and behaviour. The PSHE programme includes weekly lessons, assemblies and talks from the police, health professionals and other organisations. Working with these local external agencies, pastoral leaders regularly review the PSHE programme to ensure

that its content reflects contemporary issues pertinent to the school's local context. However, Year 11 pupils explained that they would welcome even more information about issues such as independent living, personal finances and time management. In response to this, leaders are making appropriate amendments to how the PSHE programme is delivered to key stage 4 pupils in the next academic year.

You are rightly proud that almost all pupils, and all disadvantaged pupils, continue in education, training or employment once they have completed their key stage 4 courses at Lea Manor. Leaders have developed a comprehensive careers information, advice and guidance programme. Pupils have the opportunity to visit universities, hear from speakers and visit events such as careers fairs and apprenticeship workshops. Key stage 4 pupils explained that they understand the purpose of, and gain a great deal from, the careers advice they receive and the mock interviews and work experience in which they participate. One pupil eloquently explained how she has developed confidence in 'speaking with adults in the workplace' as a result of these activities. Her peers agreed.

You correctly recognised that the standard of pupil behaviour fell across the previous academic year (2015/16) and needed to improve. Together with your pastoral leaders, you have led the introduction of a new behaviour management programme under the principles of 'ready, respectful, safe'. Teachers and pupils informed inspectors that this is making a considerable difference to the atmosphere within school. One pupil commented that the new approach 'provides a positive start to each lesson'. While this sentiment was echoed by many other pupils, some explained that some teachers do not consistently apply this behaviour management approach and this is frustrating for pupils. Inspection evidence supports their view. In many classrooms, pupils work cooperatively in a calm friendly atmosphere. However, in a small number of lessons, pupils too easily lose focus on their learning and engage in low-level disruption. This is more likely to be the case in classes where there has been a frequent change of teacher, or where teachers have not fully embraced your high expectations of how good behaviour is promoted and managed. You rightly identify that this situation is exacerbated by the difficulties in recruiting suitably skilled teachers in subjects such as science and mathematics.

Pupils typically behave well around the carefully maintained school site. The large majority move purposefully and swiftly to lessons and arrive ready to learn. They mix easily and sociably at lunchtime, making sensible use of the school's atrium and outside areas. Older pupils, more often than not, set a good example to their younger peers.

A small number of pupils in each year group do not behave as well as you, or their peers, expect. This is a source of irritation to their classmates and, rightly, of concern to you and your staff. It was noted at the time of the previous report that the number of exclusions was higher than national averages. This remains the case. Senior leaders and senior tutors (non-teaching pastoral leaders) work tirelessly to improve the conduct of those pupils who exhibit challenging behaviours and are taking too long to adapt to the higher expectations. This is having a positive impact

on some of these pupils' behaviour. However, you acknowledge that there remains significant work to be done to ensure that all pupils behave as well as they should.

You place great importance on pupils attending school regularly, rightly emphasising to parents and pupils that 'every school day counts'. You have ensured that there is a high-profile rewards system in place to heighten awareness of the importance of, and encourage, good attendance. Supported by governors, you have funded the appointment of a senior leader with a specific focus on pupil attendance. As a consequence of pastoral leaders' careful monitoring, discussions with families, home visits and work with external agencies, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is falling. There is also evidence that pupil attendance is improving in several year groups. However, overall pupil attendance remains too low.

External support

The school makes good use of a wide range of external agencies to ensure that it offers a good quality of care for pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school's PSHE programme includes contributions from the police, local health professionals, aspirational speakers and other educational institutions. Leaders also work with local primary schools to ensure a smooth transition when pupils move to Lea Manor. You work alongside local secondary schools to ensure that there is a coordinated approach when educating pupils about issues of local relevance.

Priorities for further improvement

- As a matter of urgency, ensure that the appropriate improvements to the school site are completed in a timely manner.
- Ensure that all teachers and support staff apply the school's behaviour management policy consistently and well.
- Continue to monitor and review the impact of strategies to improve the attendance and behaviour of a small number of pupils in each year group.
- Put in place appropriate strategies to ensure that incidents that result in a pupil being excluded are reduced.

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

Yours sincerely

John Lucas
Her Majesty's Inspector