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Ms Colette Roberts
Interim executive principal
Laisterdyke Leadership Academy
Thornbury Road
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Dear Ms Roberts

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Laisterdyke Leadership Academy

Following my visit with Belita Scott, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 12 June 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 aspects of the effectiveness of leadership and management (including governance) at the academy.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the school's record of staff recruitment checks and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. They met with the interim executive principal, the director of education and director of partnerships from the Tauheedul Education Trust, a group of staff and the school's designated lead for safeguarding. Inspectors spoke to pupils informally in lessons (while observing pupils' attitudes to learning) and at breaktime. They spoke formally to two groups of pupils from Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 at lunchtime. Inspectors also scrutinised attendance and exclusion data and a range of external reviews of the school's work.

Having considered the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time safeguarding arrangements are effective.

Context

Laisterdyke Leadership Academy is an average-sized secondary school. The number of pupils on roll fluctuates widely because of the large number of pupils who join or leave the school at times other than the usual starting point in Year 7. The number on roll at the time of the inspection was 946. This includes 110 students who attend the sixth form. Around half of the pupils are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding, well above that found nationally. The vast majority of pupils are of ethnic minority heritage and do not have English as their first language. An above-average proportion of pupils require additional support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and are supported with an education, health and care plan is slightly below average.

The school became an academy in April 2016 and is part of the Tauheedul Education Trust. The trust supported the predecessor school, Laisterdyke Business and Enterprise College, from January 2016 until closure. When that school was inspected in September 2015, it was judged to be inadequate. In January 2016, shortly before conversion to academy status, a monitoring inspection judged the school to be taking effective action towards the removal of special measures. The local authority put an interim executive board (governing body) in place following the September 2015 inspection. The board continued to support the school until September 2016. Since that time, leaders of the trust have led governance arrangements. There have been a number of changes in staffing since the predecessor school's monitoring inspection in January 2016, including a change of headteacher. As interim executive principal, you have been leading the school since November 2016, following the resignation of the substantive headteacher. You are working closely with the school to aid a smooth transition when the new principal takes up post towards the end of the summer term 2017. As interim executive principal, you will remain involved with the school in your role as director of school improvement for the trust. Transition arrangements are also in place for a local governing body to be constituted fully and in place by July 2017.

Leaders and managers have taken effective action to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are thorough and fit for purpose. All staff are trained in their statutory obligations and are updated regularly about emerging national requirements or local concerns. Staff have a good understanding of risks to pupils' safety and care and take urgent action in alerting leaders should they have any concerns. They speak authoritatively about how they have been trained to be vigilant in recognising risks, such as neglect, emotional or physical abuse, potential extremist or radical views, child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. Systems developed since September 2016 have enabled leaders to identify risks quickly so that early help and support to pupils and their families can be secured

Strong partnership working with children's social care, child and adolescent mental health services, educational psychologists, the local authority's 'Prevent' duty team

and police means that advice and guidance can be secured promptly and any referrals responded to quickly. The designated lead for safeguarding has made sure that record-keeping for pupils at risk, in need or who are on a child protection plan is of high quality. Records identify clearly the chronology of the very specific actions taken by the school to safeguard pupils.

Effective recruitment procedures ensure that staff appointed are suitable to work with children. Recruitment files are in good order and show the systematic and thorough way that recruitment procedures are now carried out. The school's database, which records the checks undertaken by the school, is well maintained, up to date and fully compliant with the Department for Education's requirements. The school's safeguarding policy, code of conduct and acceptable use of information and communications technology policy make clear staff's responsibilities in relation to the acceptable use of social media and mobile phones. Rigorous checks are in place to ensure that staff comply with requirements.

The trust has a robust oversight of all safeguarding arrangements and checks the impact of the school's work to secure pupils' safety scrupulously. Half-termly quality assurance reports written by external consultants include important safeguarding or child protection information, the number of incidents of poor behaviour or bullying by pupils, and attendance and exclusion information for all pupils and all groups of pupils. Reviews of the school's effectiveness by the trust's director of education contribute to the wide range of information that trust leaders have about the school's performance. This information is used well to hold the interim executive principal and other leaders to account for the impact of their work. Regular challenge meetings also ensure that safeguarding procedures are embedded across the school and followed by all staff.

Risk assessments for activities out of school are appropriate. They benefit from a recently developed online system to secure senior leaders' authority for visits to proceed. This enables leaders to have strong strategic oversight and make sure that the checks and balances to secure pupils' safety and welfare on visits are effective. Senior leaders assess the effectiveness of risk assessments and adapt to take account of learning from reviews of occasional shortfalls in previous visits.

Recent monitoring reports to the trust identify clearly the impact of actions taken to reduce the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent or who are excluded temporarily. Meticulous analysis of incidents has enabled leaders to understand the causes and to take remedial action. Rates have reduced significantly in the past year, and particularly for groups such as disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, leaders know that persistent absence rates and fixed-period exclusion rates remain too high for these groups. Work is ongoing with families and individual pupils to reduce rates further.

The new behaviour policy, which outlines a clearer set of rewards and sanctions, is

being applied more consistently across the school. Pupils and staff recognise the improvements in behaviour during the last year. This is due to the higher expectations that the interim executive principal has of pupils' conduct, together with improvements in the quality of teaching and in the way that staff manage behaviour more consistently. Pupils recognise the improvements made to the quality of teaching. They understand the benefits of the tighter and fairer expectations of behaviour. However, they and staff report that there are still too many lessons that are interrupted by the silly or low-level misbehaviour of some pupils. This is mainly when cover supervisors or supply teachers take lessons when the regular teacher is absent. Inspectors also found this to be the case.

Pupils report that they feel safe in school and know who they can go to if they have any concerns. They report that the school is one which promotes equality of opportunity for all and that girls and boys are equally encouraged to be ambitious for their futures. Pupils are well taught to understand, be alert to and manage, risks to their safety and care. For example, younger pupils described knowledgeably what extremism means and the actions they would take should they experience any such unwarranted behaviour from others. Pupils also have a good understanding of risks to their personal safety, for example from drugs, alcohol and sexual exploitation. They are well versed in the risks from social media and receive regular training in these areas. Assemblies, tutor time, religious education lessons and the curriculum generally promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. This work also develops their good understanding of the qualities of trust, respect and tolerance of the views, faiths and cultures of others. Pupils report a good understanding of different types of bullying, including all types of prejudice-based bullying. Some older pupils report that while any incidents are stamped on robustly, racially motivated name-calling takes place from a small number of pupils. Leaders record any such incidents carefully. Records show the actions they have taken as a response, including involving parents when needed.

External support

The school has been well served by the support and challenge from professionals across the trust. Advice and guidance, including delivery of exemplar lessons from English and mathematics consultants, are contributing to the improvements in both subjects. Similarly, support from the trust's sixth-form consultant is contributing to improvements in sixth-form provision. Human resources services have worked intensively with leaders in the school to ensure that recruitment and staff vetting procedures are robust. External consultants, commissioned by the trust, and work of the recently appointed director of education have brought rigour to the monitoring and evaluation processes. The most significant contribution of the trust has been the deployment of you as the director of school improvement to the post of interim executive principal. Pupils and staff report on the strong impact of your work on the school's improvements. Local authority support for interim governance arrangements and support for the school's safeguarding arrangements

have been valued by the trust and school leaders.

Priorities for further improvement

- Embed systems for improving the quality of teaching further so that pupils are consistently engaged in their learning and are not diverted into silly or low-level misbehaviour.
- Ensure that the recent rewards-based approach to managing pupils' behaviour more overtly and consistently celebrates the behaviour of pupils who always behave well.

I am copying this letter to the executive board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bradford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Farrow
Her Majesty's Inspector