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22 November 2017

Sara Davey  
Principal  
Mounts Bay Academy  
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Penzance  
Cornwall  
TR18 3JT

Dear Mrs Davey

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Mounts Bay Academy**

Following my visit with Steve Smith, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 8– 9 November 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 for pupils at the school.

### **Evidence**

We met with you, senior leaders including the designated safeguarding lead, members of staff, groups of pupils and parents. We met with governors and scrutinised minutes of their meetings. We inspected the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We considered the 81 replies to Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents and we spoke with some parents. An inspector held a telephone conversation with a senior local authority officer.

We visited lessons and an assembly, and we observed pupils in their social times and between lessons. We scrutinised attendance and behaviour records and the local authority safeguarding audit that you recently completed. We examined the case files of randomly chosen vulnerable pupils and those who had previously been excluded.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

### **Context**

Mounts Bay Academy became an academy in 2011. It was judged to be outstanding in 2012. Alongside your role as principal of Mounts Bay Academy, you are currently executive headteacher of The Five Islands School on the Isles of Scilly and spend a proportion of your working week on the islands. Discussions are under way to establish a multi-academy trust to include the two schools.

Mounts Bay Academy has just under 1000 pupils on roll. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is just below average. The proportion from minority ethnic groups is also below average and the proportion of those whose first language is not believed to be English is well below average. The number of pupils who are identified as having special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is well above the national average, but the proportion with education, health and care plans is in line with that in other schools. There is significantly more pupil movement in and out of the school during the school year than in most schools across the country. Overall, the school's community has average levels of deprivation. However, there are pockets of significant deprivation within its catchment area.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management in ensuring that safeguarding and child protection arrangements keep pupils safe**

You have successfully built a culture across the school that puts keeping pupils safe from harm at the centre of its work. You also put a strong emphasis on ensuring that vulnerable pupils receive the support they need to help them thrive. This includes those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, or are disadvantaged. You and your leadership team demonstrate a real commitment to supporting those pupils who are experiencing difficulties in their lives out of school or who face additional challenges.

Your leadership is characterised by clear-sighted self-evaluation. Over the years you have been in post, you have re-examined and renewed your approaches to issues as they change over time. This is particularly the case with your approach to ensuring that vulnerable pupils can make the most of the opportunities they have in school. You have then acted to secure resources to make the necessary improvements. This combination of moral commitment, intellectual integrity and prompt action is at the heart of the school's success in meeting the needs of vulnerable pupils.

Governors have an effective oversight of safeguarding. The nominated safeguarding

governor is well informed and works closely with school leaders. The chair of governors and his vice-chairs meet with you regularly and they challenge you on a range of issues across the school. The school's self-evaluation is shared and discussed. However, evidence of formal scrutiny of safeguarding is more limited. Safeguarding is a standing item on the agenda of governing body meetings. However, there is very little evidence of debate and challenge about the school's performance with regard to safeguarding or provision for vulnerable pupils and those at risk of exclusion. Equally, in the meetings that governors have held to review the principal's decision to permanently exclude a pupil, governors have not challenged leaders about the support given to the pupil prior to the exclusion.

The school's systems that underpin effective safeguarding are in place and working effectively. The single central record of staff is well maintained. All the necessary checks are made when staff are appointed, and records of staff training are comprehensive. As a result, you can be confident that staff understand their responsibilities and know what to do should a pupil disclose to them that they feel unsafe. The local authority has commended you on your most recent annual safeguarding audit. This is an improvement on 2016, when the audit was less detailed.

Your commitment to support pupils who have additional needs or who are facing challenges is clear. It has led to you creating some strong and well-thought-out provision to allow these pupils to experience success. The Compass Centre is valued by these pupils who benefit from supportive and helpful staff. Staff skilfully adapt the curriculum so that pupils can access it more easily. This enables them to make progress with learning that they would otherwise find difficult. You have updated and revised the provision that the Compass Centre offers several times over the year to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of pupils.

More recently, you have introduced the i-College. This facility is designed to meet the needs of pupils who have significant challenges or whose behaviour is preventing them from making progress. As a result of this provision, vulnerable pupils are getting the individualised support that they need to succeed and you are able to continue to include them in your school community.

Last year, you undertook a survey of the views of pupils. You felt that the results highlighted that it was time to revisit several aspects of the school's provision, including its behaviour policy. Your previous policy focused on clarity of consequences and sanctions. This was deemed by staff and pupils to be rather rigid and weighted too heavily in favour of sanctions. It led to some vulnerable pupils and those who had additional needs receiving a disproportionate number of sanctions. Rightly, you were keen to preserve the school's reputation for good discipline and so you proceeded with caution. You have invested significant resource in training staff in a new approach to discipline, based around restoring relationships and promoting a more positive approach. Staff and pupils are enthusiastic about this development. Staff feel empowered to solve disputes and

issues that arise. Pupils feel that they are listened to. As a result of this initiative, the numbers of pupils excluded from school has fallen significantly, particularly of pupils who are vulnerable or who have SEN and/or disabilities.

Parents and pupils are very confident that pupils are safe in school and that they are well looked after. Parents are confident that standards of behaviour remain high. Pupils agree, and they feel the recent changes to the behaviour code have built on those standards further.

Your commitment to ensuring that all pupils can flourish has led you to employ a senior leader with a social care background as a family support manager. As a result of this additional expertise, you have been able to refine the school's approach to addressing the additional needs of vulnerable pupils. Staff identify, at an early stage, when pupils are experiencing difficulties and they take the right steps to help them. Your pupil records are well coordinated and detailed. This ensures that staff are able to monitor the issues that pupils face and intervene appropriately. The creation of the family support role has also significantly increased the school's ability to work with vulnerable pupils and to reach out to their families directly. This improves their chances of being successful in school. This focus has made a very significant difference to the school's capacity to meet the needs of these pupils. The family support manager's work is highly valued by parents and pupils. She acts as a link between the school's pastoral staff and the local authority's social care team and has created a very strong network of support for pupils who might otherwise fail to thrive.

Pupils treat each other with tolerance and respect. For example, the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) group meets regularly. Members report that they feel listened to by the school and are not made to feel unwelcome by other pupils.

You ensure that there are effective systems to monitor attendance. There are clear procedures in place and staff work closely with the local authority's education welfare service to support pupils who have poor attendance. Pastoral staff have a detailed understanding of individual cases of absence. You have used the full range of resources you have created, such as the i-College and the Compass Centre, to encourage pupils back into school when their attendance has been weak. As a result of this work, attendance, which is currently in line with the national average, continues to improve. There has been a significant improvement in the attendance of vulnerable pupils. In the past, a small number of pupils on part-time timetables have been incorrectly coded in attendance registers. However, school leaders are now aware of this and have rectified the error.

There are good systems in place to monitor the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The needs of individual pupils are understood, and appropriate support is put in place to allow them to make progress. Progress is monitored closely and support plans are adapted where necessary. Last year, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities were excluded too often. You recognised this and responded

by improving provision for these pupils with the use of the i-College and the Compass Centre. These initiatives have also enabled you to work more closely with the families of these pupils. Such has been their success that exclusions of these pupils have been virtually eliminated.

Over the last few years, you have made effective use of pupil premium funding. However, last year disadvantaged pupils made less progress and were excluded more often than they should have been. Leaders did not analyse the available data in sufficient detail to allow you to ensure that this group of pupils were helped to overcome the barriers they faced. You have set to work to rectify this. You are sharpening the monitoring process so that you can intervene where necessary to support this group of disadvantaged pupils.

### **External support**

You work constructively with local authority officers at all levels. Your joint work with the education welfare service has led to a reduction in absence, particularly of vulnerable pupils. The family support work that you have been undertaking has been greatly enhanced by strong, positive relationships with social care professionals.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that governors robustly challenge senior leaders with regard to safeguarding and provision for vulnerable pupils. This challenge should be clearly evident in minutes of meetings.
- Monitor the behaviour and performance of disadvantaged pupils more robustly so that you can be sure that provision for them is meeting their needs.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Lovett

**Her Majesty's Inspector**