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7 December 2017

Mrs Stephanie Neill  
Principal  
Clacton Coastal Academy  
Pathfields Road  
Clacton on Sea  
Essex  
CO15 3JL

Dear Mrs Neill

### **No formal designation inspection of Clacton Coastal Academy**

Following my visit with Paul O'Shea, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 22 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 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 at no notice because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection. They met with you and other senior leaders, and two groups of pupils. They held a meeting with two members of the local governing body. Three representatives of the academy trust also participated in this meeting via a conference telephone link.

Inspectors also scrutinised a range of documentation provided by school leaders about behaviour and attendance, and the actions taken to maintain pupils' behaviour and welfare. Inspectors visited lessons to observe pupils' behaviour. They observed pupils' conduct during break and lunchtime, and as they departed at the end of the day.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

## **Context**

The school is much larger than average. It serves the town of Clacton and its surrounding areas, parts of which have significantly high levels of deprivation. Most pupils are White British; very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. More than half of all pupils are eligible for the pupil premium funding provided for disadvantaged pupils. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is above average. A higher than average proportion of SEN pupils have an education, health and care plan. The school is sponsored by the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET).

The school was inspected in 2014 and was judged to be good. Since then, a restructuring of the school last year led to significant changes in staffing, and some turbulence. You took over the leadership of the school in 2016. Since September 2017, the school has shared a governing body with another local academy, which is also run by the AET.

## **Safeguarding**

Following significant changes in staffing, including leaders and managers last year, the trust commissioned an external review of the school's safeguarding arrangements. Leaders wanted to test that all statutory requirements remained securely in place.

Inspection evidence does not support all of the findings of this review. However, inspectors agree with its overall view that there is a strong culture of safeguarding within the school. You and your senior leaders ensure that robust procedures are in place to protect pupils from harm. All of your staff know what to do if they have any concerns about pupils in their care.

Your leaders show a thorough understanding of the school's context and the regular challenges this presents. Their records show that they deal with a constant flow of safeguarding concerns raised by staff. A large proportion of these concerns are serious and require detailed investigation to ensure pupils' safety and welfare. This is done effectively. A team of leaders and pastoral staff trained in safeguarding work together to follow up issues with pupils, parents and carers. They engage with a wide range of external agencies to protect pupils identified to be at risk.

Safeguarding records are maintained systematically. They include clear timelines and detailed actions taken to manage or resolve matters. Briefings and weekly panel meetings enable staff to review the progress of serious issues referred to social services and other support agencies, and take swift action where it is needed. The school's most vulnerable pupils, particularly those at risk of abuse, exploitation or going missing are known well, and monitored carefully.

The local governing body and the academy trust have a clear understanding of the

school's safeguarding arrangements. Governors make regular checks of safeguarding and ensure that the policy is up to date. This includes periodic reviews of the school's procedures when appointing new staff.

Inspectors' scrutiny of the single central record showed that all staff are checked to ensure they are suitable to work with children. It also revealed that a significant proportion of them have not provided photographic evidence of their identities. This is partly because they were appointed long before more stringent checks when appointing new staff were introduced, and also because a few staff do not have official documents with a photograph on them. The school employs a large proportion of unqualified teachers. The qualifications of these staff, linked to their specific roles and responsibilities, are not recorded on the single central record. You and your governors acknowledge that these minor shortcomings can be quickly and easily corrected to present a complete, detailed record.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in the school. They know that if they have concerns they can approach any member of staff for help. They praised the work of your pastoral staff in 'the hubs' who they feel will help them to sort things out quickly. Younger pupils have confidence in prefects who supervise the school site. Prefects also contribute during assemblies to promoting pupils' safety and welfare, and broadening their understanding of the school's anti-bullying strategy.

Inspectors asked pupils about bullying, in particular how often it happens and how these incidents are managed. Pupils told us that most bullying issues begin in the community, and are brought into the school. Incidents are mostly name-calling and spreading rumours on social media. They feel that these incidents are rare, and when they do happen pupils can approach any member of staff or a prefect who can help them sort things out. All pupils who spoke with inspectors had confidence in your staff to resolve bullying matters.

Your records show that so far this year, the raised expectations have led to a large proportion of pupils being removed from lessons or ending up in detention, due to their behaviour. There has also been an increase in permanent exclusions from the school due to unacceptable behaviour that puts other pupils at risk of harm.

When asked their views, pupils said that behaviour in lessons has improved. They feel that new procedures introduced this year are working, and that all pupils understand the 'chance, choice, and consequence' procedures used by teachers to manage their behaviour. Observations of pupils at work did not fully support this, mainly because these new procedures are not firmly established. In lessons seen by inspectors, the majority of pupils generally behaved themselves, but too many of them displayed poor attitudes towards learning. Shouting out, wandering around or idle chatter often spoiled the learning of others. A significant minority of younger boys and some girls simply do not work hard enough. Not all teachers challenge this behaviour or apply the school's agreed procedures to manage it consistently. Pupils' poor attitudes do not unduly affect their safeguarding, but have a detrimental effect

upon their own and others' learning.

Pupils feel safe when moving around the school. They say that behaviour outside of lessons has improved because staff are checking it more often. Pupils who wear the incorrect uniform, use their mobile phones without permission or use bad language are given slips by staff. Pupils understand that three of these slips leads to a short detention, where pupils lose their social time at breaks and lunchtimes.

Attendance is below average. This means that the safeguarding of some of the school's most vulnerable pupils cannot always be ensured because they are persistently absent. The school's attendance officers have until recently had little impact on improving this situation. Raised expectations, including more challenging targets, have been set for them this year to get more pupils back into school.

Staff and pupils are aware of the dangers presented outside of school, in the local community. Your leaders are alert to these dangers; safeguarding staff are available to speak to during school holidays if pupils have any concerns. A detailed programme of personal, social and health education throughout key stages 3 and 4 helps to raise pupils' awareness of the risks attached to unhealthy lifestyles, peer pressure, gang culture and radicalisation.

Pupils are kept safe on site. Gates are locked and access to main doors is controlled by staff. The public road between the school's two main buildings presents a risk to pupils' safety. This is managed effectively by security staff who are always on duty at the start and end of each day and during lesson changeover. A minority of parents and carers put pupils at risk by driving down this road to pick up their children after school, rather than following the school's agreed procedure to use the turning circle.

Your records show that not all parents and carers follow the school's complaints procedure. This prevents you from taking swift action to resolve matters. You and your governors have recognised that when incidents of bullying are dealt with by staff, they need to keep in touch with parents and carers afterwards to ensure that matters remain resolved fully to the satisfaction of all concerned.

### **External support**

Inspectors investigated how school leaders manage complaints about safeguarding, including bullying. The local authority has investigated serious complaints received from parents and carers. Your records show that this is carried out systematically and the findings are shared with parents and carers, and leaders, including governors.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- ensure that the minor shortcomings revealed during the inspection are promptly corrected so that the single central record is fully detailed and complete
- strengthen procedures to follow up complaints received by parents and carers so that all stakeholders feel that matters remain fully resolved
- improve pupils' attitudes towards learning in lessons
- ensure that the school's new procedures to manage pupils' behaviour become firmly established and are used consistently by all teachers

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

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**