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Mr Christopher Richardson
Headteacher
Heworth Grange Comprehensive School
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Dear Mr Richardson

No formal designation inspection of Heworth Grange Comprehensive School

Following my visit with Barry Found, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Joanne Owens, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 23 January 2018, 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 attendance of pupils at the school.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents and policies relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. They met with you, other senior leaders and heads of year. Inspectors met with a group of staff, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), the designated and deputy designated safeguarding leads and a group of governors. Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils in the main school and students in the sixth form, both formally and informally. The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative from Consilium Academies.

Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of information provided by the school. This included school risk assessments, information on educational visits, governors' minutes, attendance and behaviour information, as well as the school's arrangements for following up absence and incidents. The school's action plan was

scrutinised as part of the visit. Inspectors visited a sample of lessons to check on behaviour, safety and attitudes to learning.

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

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers are taking effective action to improve the attendance of pupils.

Context

Heworth Grange Comprehensive School is a larger than average sized secondary school. The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average. The vast majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.

Since the section 5 inspection in January 2017, when the school was judged to require special measures, there have been no substantial changes to staffing. However, you acknowledge that recruiting teachers in mathematics remains an issue. It is planned that the school will become a sponsored academy on 1 February 2018 as part of Consilium Academies. Since the summer term, support has been provided from the trust to you and other leaders. As a result, senior leaders' roles and responsibilities are being reviewed. There has been a review of governance and a review of the pupil premium spending. However, there has been little impact as a result of these reviews.

Inspection findings

You and other leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Policy and practice go hand in hand at the school. This is because procedures that are in place are supported by clear systems and detailed records that hold relevant information. This enables referrals to be made and incidents to be dealt with in a timely and effective manner. You and other leaders have forged effective links with relevant outside agencies, including the local authority, and these provide you with appropriate support when dealing with pupils and families who may need additional support. Records are clear and detail relevant information regarding your dealings with these agencies.

The arrangements for safeguarding are ably managed by your deputy headteacher, who is tenacious and thorough. She is supported by her deputy designated safeguarding lead and a supportive team of staff who make safeguarding children a priority across the school and in the sixth-form provision. Staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding and receive timely, appropriate training. They are clear that

safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and understand the school's procedures for keeping children safe. This was particularly evident in a Year 9 science lesson, where the teacher's expectations of pupils' safety were uncompromising. She ensured that pupils wore the correct safety equipment, moved about the laboratory and handled equipment safely.

Leaders are aware of the challenges and barriers that face young people in the school and in the local community. As a result, an appropriate diet of safety education is in place through the school's assembly and tutorial system; for example, pupils in the main school speak about how to stay safe when using social media and they are aware of the school's procedures for fire safety.

Sixth-form students have also benefited from the safety education lessons they received in the main school. However, students say that opportunities are limited for them to access a planned personal, social, health and economic education programme in the sixth form due to other demands. Leaders also acknowledge this. Nonetheless, sixth-form students are mature in their approach to safeguarding and they understand the important part they play in being role models for younger pupils in the school.

Procedures are in place for checking visitors as they enter the school site; for example, visitors are required to read and sign the school's 'visitor information' document that details appropriate safeguarding arrangements. Visitors, staff and sixth-form students are clearly identified through the wearing of different coloured lanyards. Leaders check the suitability of adults to work with children appropriately.

Governors take their role to safeguard children very seriously. They have accessed appropriate training, and, because of this, are knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures. Governors have ensured that all policies are up to date with current guidance. They ensure that, when recruiting staff, interview panels have someone present that has accessed safer recruitment training and that candidates are asked appropriate questions relating to the safety and welfare of children.

Pupils say they feel safe at school. Pupils also understand the different forms of bullying that can take place, and they are aware of whom to speak to if bullying occurs. Pupils state that if bullying does take place they are, in the main, confident that it will be dealt with effectively by a member of staff. Pupils believe that staff are approachable, particularly sixth-form students, who speak highly of staff and the 'extra mile' they go to, to support them and offer them advice and guidance. Pupils hold doors open to visitors and they are keen to share their views. Some were particularly keen to speak about the improvements in rewarding good behaviour.

There is a high staff presence around the large school site. Leaders plan duty points appropriately and staff are vigilant when they are on duty. As a result, the school site is orderly.

Pupils are attentive and compliant in lessons and relationships between pupils and staff are respectful and cooperative. Pupils' attitudes to learning, on the other hand, vary, and some pupils do not have an ambition or determination to drive their own learning forward. Where pupils demonstrate positive attitudes, they engage in activities, want to achieve well and take pride in their work.

You and other leaders have put in place a range of strategies to address the weaknesses in pupils' behaviour and attendance. In September 2017, a new 'behaviour for learning' system was launched. The system rewards good behaviour, but also ensures that pupils understand there are consequences for poor behaviour. Pupils say the system provides a clear understanding of the consequences of poor behaviour and, as a result, there are fewer incidents that disrupt pupils' learning. However, some pupils say (and inspection evidence indicates) that some pupils continue to disrupt the learning of others and some staff do not use the system consistently. You and other leaders are aware of these concerns and are working hard to ensure that the system is embedded and being utilised consistently by all staff.

Where pupils attend alternative provision, a designated member of staff is responsible for keeping a close check on their welfare and attendance. These pupils, however, do continue to attend school for three days per week, where they access a suitable curriculum, including English, mathematics and science.

You and other leaders are not complacent about attendance and because of this there are some improvements; however, these are not rapid enough. Refined roles within the attendance team, streamlining of overly complex systems and visits to other schools to seek effective practice are contributing to some improvement in the attendance of pupils.

Leaders, including the SENCo, now monitor and track key pupils closely. As a result, leaders provide appropriate support and ensure that these pupils attend school more regularly. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils, where some strategies have been successful in improving their attendance this academic year. Strategies such as first-day contact and governors' attendance panels are used to alert parents about the importance of their child attending school regularly. However, despite some improvement, attendance overall and for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities are below the national average for other pupils.

Persistent absenteeism, despite some slight improvement, particularly of disadvantaged pupils, is too high. Strategies implemented have not had a positive impact as swiftly as leaders would have liked. However, leaders are well aware of this and do recognise that they need to do more to ensure that outcomes for pupils, particularly disadvantaged and SEN pupils, are not negatively affected by low attendance rates.

External support

The school has worked closely with the local authority in relation to safeguarding procedures, policies and protocols. As a result, safeguarding continues to be effective. Since the previous inspection, a review of governance has also taken place, facilitated by a national leader of governance. Consequently, governors have a better understanding of their strengths and areas for development. A pupil premium review has also taken place; however, there is little evidence to show how this review has improved provision for this group of pupils.

Priorities for further improvement

- Leaders should ensure that a planned personal, social, health and economic education programme is delivered in the sixth form.
- Leaders should continue to monitor the behaviour for learning system to ensure that it is applied consistently by staff.
- Leaders should continue their drive to improve the attendance and reduce persistent absenteeism of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN needs and/or disabilities.

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

Yours sincerely

Darren Stewart
Her Majesty's Inspector