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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mr Dean Judson  
Headteacher  
Hurworth School  
Croft Road  
Hurworth-on-Tees  
Darlington  
County Durham  
DL2 2JG

Dear Mr Judson

### **No formal designation inspection of Hurworth School**

Following my visit with Michael Wardle, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 24 April 2018, 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 because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, aspects of the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school (including governance), and welfare of pupils at the school.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors met with you, leaders responsible for safeguarding, the deputy headteacher, the behaviour support worker, and representatives from both the local governing body and the Swift multi-academy trust board of directors. They considered the views of pupils throughout the day, including two meetings with representative groups of pupils from all age ranges and a review of the school's pupil questionnaires. The 15 responses to Ofsted's online parent survey Parent View were considered, along with two emails sent to the inspectors by parents. Inspectors also discussed the school's provision with two parents who had requested to share their views. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, moving around school, during lunchtime and breaktime, and at the beginning and end of the school day. An inspector held a telephone conversation with a local authority safeguarding officer to determine her view of safeguarding arrangements

at the school.

Inspectors examined a wide range of school documentation related to safeguarding and pupils' welfare. They scrutinised the school's record of checks carried out on staff and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements, including the school's safeguarding audit. Inspectors reviewed the school's behaviour and exclusion logs, as well as documents related to pupils' exclusion and return to school. They considered minutes of governing body meetings, school policies, health-and-safety audits and risk assessments, and the school's analysis of attendance and exclusions.

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

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

#### **Context**

There are 679 pupils at Hurworth School. The vast majority are White British and the proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is well below that found nationally. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, including those who have a statement of educational need or an education, health and care plan, is below the national average. The school has special educational needs provision for 14 pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder.

The school has recently been instrumental in establishing the Swift Academies multi-academy trust. This has resulted in changes to several leadership roles within this school and the other secondary school in the trust. During these changes, leadership capacity and strengths have been maintained at the school.

There is a strong safeguarding culture at your school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Together with staff and governors, you demonstrate a strong understanding of how to keep pupils safe and have put in place appropriate systems to ensure pupils' safety and well-being. Your school aim of 'Achieving Excellence with Care' was evident in the ethos noted throughout school during the inspection.

Leaders ensure that appropriate checks for all staff, governors and volunteers are completed. Staff and governors receive regular and appropriate training so they know how to keep pupils safe, including training about how to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism. Consequently, staff and governors understand the safeguarding procedures and their own responsibilities. You and your staff work effectively with parents and carers and with other agencies.

Your pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. This

is because your personal, social, health and economic curriculum, tutor time and assemblies all help pupils to develop their understanding of how to live safe, healthy lives. Pupils know the different forms that bullying can take and know that staff will help them if they ever have concerns. Pupils believe that behaviour at your school is very positive and that incidents of bullying are rare. Your detailed records confirm this and demonstrate that staff follow up bullying incidents promptly. Pupils told inspectors that your school is a safe, friendly place where staff understood them as individuals. During the inspection, pupils' behaviour and conduct was very good in lessons, at breaktimes and lunchtimes and as they moved around the school.

Since 2015 when fixed-term exclusions peaked, you and your staff have worked hard to reduce the number of exclusions, while at the same time maintaining your high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Consequently, the number of fixed-term exclusions has fallen over the past two years. Your detailed analysis of internal and external exclusions provides leaders and governors with a clear picture of where you need to reduce exclusions further and you have plans in place to achieve this. My review of your systems for recording exclusions demonstrates that you are following your school behaviour policy, including letters to parents explaining the reasons for their child's exclusion. However, on occasion some pupils' files are not well organised in chronological order. This makes it difficult for leaders to review the actions taken in relation to exclusion and support for the pupil on their return to school.

You have recently revised your complaints procedures to ensure consistency of approach across the Swift Academies. This provides a well-structured approach, including opportunities for informal complaints and formal complaints with an independent panel review if required. The new complaints procedure has a useful template for complainants to record their views. We agreed that it would be worthwhile to ensure that staff and parents are aware of your revisions to the trust-wide complaints policy and the template that is available to record complainants' views if required.

Pupils who access support in the special educational resource base are well integrated into the school. These pupils are taught in mainstream lessons where appropriate, and receive support in the resource base when required. At lunchtimes, opportunities for these pupils to socialise with their peers from across the school ensure that their social skills and friendship groups are extended. As a result, these pupils' learning and social needs are well met.

Since the recent formation of the Swift Academies trust, a board of directors has been established for strategic governance of the schools within the trust. There is also a local governing body to provide school governance. Members of both these groups have a good understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for development regarding safeguarding and pupils' well-being. This is because they meet regularly with leaders responsible for safeguarding and pupils' welfare and leaders provide them with detailed reports. Minutes of meetings show that

governors provide leaders with appropriate support and challenge in these areas.

Regular meetings by pastoral staff consider the needs of any pupils who may be vulnerable for safeguarding or welfare reasons. These meetings result in a welfare bulletin to inform all staff of pupils' well-being and academic needs. This ensures that staff are well informed so that they can plan to meet pupils' needs. Specific support from the behaviour support worker provides effective guidance and strategies for pupils identified with social and emotional needs. Drop-in sessions are available for those pupils who choose to seek support. Consequently, staff provide well-thought-through provision for pupils who may need additional support with aspects of their well-being.

Staff set high expectations for pupils' behaviour and they make good use of the school's systems for recording positive and negative behaviour. Pupils understand these approaches and they know that their positive behaviour will be recognised and rewarded. At the same time, they understand that there are clearly defined consequences for negative behaviour. Leaders analyse the information from this class chart system carefully. This enables them to identify where whole-school refinements are required to improve behaviour across the school further.

The school's student single central record details any behaviour incidents, including where this has resulted in exclusion. A parallel system is used to record concerns regarding safeguarding or welfare concerns about pupils. Staff complete both these records in a diligent and detailed fashion. However, your leaders have identified that synthesising the information in these two systems would ensure that any links between pupils' behaviour and safeguarding or welfare issues could be made more efficiently by staff.

Leaders complete detailed analysis of pupils' attendance. Where pupils' absence levels are high, staff provide relevant support combined with clear expectations and specific timeframes for improvement. While the overall attendance level has increased and pupils' persistent absence reduced, your analysis shows that disadvantaged pupils' attendance levels are too low. Your pupil premium strategy, which aims to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, identifies a range of actions to support these pupils academically and with their behaviour, including actions that aim to improve their attendance. Your current analysis shows there is more to do to improve the attendance for some of these pupils further.

### **External support**

Leaders contribute effectively to local authority safeguarding and pupil welfare arrangements. For example, the headteacher is a member of the Darlington Safeguarding Children Board. The school chairs the local authority behaviour and attendance partnership. Leaders and staff seek guidance as required in relation to safeguarding concerns and auditing the school's safeguarding practice. Staff attend mandatory and additional training provided by the local authority. Some staff are

trained as safeguarding trainers. Consequently, staff and leaders are well trained and regularly review safeguarding practice to ensure that best practice is adopted. The members of the safeguarding team, who are readily identifiable by their green lanyards, all have specific areas of safeguarding expertise that others in the team of staff can draw upon.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Ensure that the Swift Academies complaints procedure is well understood by staff and parents.
- Further reduce fixed-term exclusions towards the averages found nationally and ensure that the documentation relating to pupils' exclusion is well organised and reflects the school's practice.
- Complete your planned integration of your systems for recording pupils' behaviour and safeguarding to enable this information to be available in one place.
- Continue to implement strategies to reduce the absence of disadvantaged pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body, the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Darlington. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Reeves

**Her Majesty's Inspector**