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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



14 December 2018

Mr Greg Rodulfo
Head of School
Cecil Jones Academy
Eastern Avenue
Southend-on-Sea
Essex
SS2 4BU

Dear Mr Rodulfo,

No formal designation inspection of Cecil Jones Academy

Following my visit with Russell Ayling, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 4 to 5 December 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 at the request of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector in order to check the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the school.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We met with you, staff members, the trust's chief executive officer, and rapid improvement board (RIB) members. Inspectors held formal meetings with 5 groups of pupils and 2 groups of staff.

Inspectors scrutinised records of pupils' attendance, behaviour and exclusions. They looked at how leaders deal with complaints, the minutes of the RIB meetings, and records of the meetings with parents. Inspectors visited lessons to observe pupils' behaviour. They observed pupils' conduct during breaktime and lunchtime, between lessons and as they arrived at the school. Telephone calls were made to a representative of the local authority and providers of alternative education.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

The school is an average-sized 11 to 18 academy, serving the town of Southend and its surrounding areas. Just under three quarters of pupils are from a white British background, the remainder are of different ethnic heritage. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is significantly above the national average. However, the percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including those who have an education, health and care plan, is broadly in line with the national average.

The school converted to academy status under the sponsorship of the Legra Academy Trust in September 2015. At its last full inspection in December 2017, the school was judged to be inadequate, and safeguarding was found to be ineffective. The local governing body was replaced with a RIB. In July 2018, the school was inspected again, and safeguarding was judged to be effective. The management of the school is being re-brokered. The Loxford School Trust is expected to take charge in March 2019. As a result, the RIB has not been able to make any substantive appointments for senior posts. Since the inspection in July, the principal has left the academy. A new interim principal was appointed in the summer of 2018 but had to leave his position for personal reasons early in September. The trust's director of behaviour, safety and welfare is the current head of school.

As found at the previous inspection in July, safeguarding processes remain effective. All statutory pre-employment checks on staff are carried out and the single central register is well maintained. The safeguarding team meet regularly to review referrals and to monitor the progress of current caseloads. Information in files shows that staff work closely with other agencies and put pupils' needs squarely at the centre of their work. Since the previous visit, the safeguarding team has delivered training so that all staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities under the new statutory guidance. The link member for safeguarding from the RIB visits regularly and monitors the work of the team closely.

Most pupils spoken to say that they feel safe. They learn about potential dangers through values lessons, tutor time and assemblies. Pupils can explain how they assess risks and take appropriate action to keep themselves safe. A small group of Year 7 pupils say that they do not feel safe because of the poor behaviour of some pupils in their year group. While inspectors did see poor attitudes to learning in Year 7, they did not witness any unsafe behaviours. However, leaders and the members of the RIB are acutely aware of the current behavioural issues in Year 7 and have a range of measures in place to address these.

In most classes, pupils behave well and there is a calm learning environment. Pupils display positive attitudes by staying focused on their work, being keen to ask and answer questions, and completing their work conscientiously. Most staff get on well

with pupils, and the clear routines they have in place help lessons to run smoothly and without interruption. Where practice is most effective, pupils receive valuable assistance from the other adults who support them to work well with other pupils or on their own. Pupils' behaviour at breaktime, lunchtime, between lessons and on entering the site is orderly. At lunch, pupils organise themselves quickly and wait sensibly and patiently for their food. Older pupils play football or basketball outside, while younger groups gather together amicably to talk while they eat.

However, there is a minority of pupils who do not behave well. All pupils spoken to during the inspection could cite examples where their learning is disrupted by others. Staff, including experienced teachers, spoke of a core group across all year groups whose behaviour presents a considerable challenge. Inspectors did see poor behaviour, and most of it, but not all, was in Year 7. This marries up with the views of staff, pupils, leaders and members of the RIB. Some pupils' attitudes towards learning are not good. For example, a Year 7 boy was 'keen' to show an inspector his red report card at lunchtime to highlight that he had been sent out of three of the four lessons that morning. This included a comment to say he had produced very little work in the other lesson. Leaders know that the attitudes of some pupils remain a key focus for improvement.

The head of school and RIB have introduced new systems to help pupils develop better attitudes and learning habits so that they attend more often. The internal learning unit now focuses on the root cause of pupils' behaviour. Alongside key workers, it provides additional support to help pupils overcome any barriers to learning. Additional enrichment opportunities help pupils to broaden their experiences and increase their enthusiasm and enjoyment for learning. While this has led to a decrease in the number of fixed-term exclusions, there are still too many pupils being removed from lessons. Leaders, and the RIB, receive regular updates, fortnightly reports and notes from behaviour welfare meetings that help them to monitor trends and the impact of their actions. They know that the attendance of some groups has improved, but overall attendance remains too low and persistent absence too high.

There are also more robust processes in place to deal with bullying. These include meeting all parties concerned, including parents, regularly to ensure that any issues are fully resolved, and that there are no further incidents. The RIB looks at patterns and, while they have not seen any trends linked to bullying, they know there are still issues with the perception of bullying at the school within the community. School records show that there have been 7 sustained bullying incidents recorded since September, all of which have now been resolved. None of the pupils spoken to during the inspection say that bullying is an issue for them.

The head of school has worked tirelessly to improve relationships with parents. Since September, there have been over 70 individual meetings. The feedback from these meetings shows that parents appreciate the efforts of staff to help them resolve issues, and this is leading to a decrease in complaints to third parties. A

summary of the parental comments included 'helpful', 'understanding', 'supportive' and 'very impressed with how issues were picked up' and 'happy with the plan of action'.

External support

The RIB has an accurate view of the school's effectiveness because they monitor standards closely. Minutes from their meetings show that the RIB sets clear targets and holds staff to account if progress against required improvements is too slow. Complaints are investigated thoroughly, well documented and the RIB can provide comprehensive evidence to justify their actions. The small but effective group has driven improvements since the previous full inspection. However, at the initial meeting with inspectors they rightly pointed out that there was still much to do to improve attendance, remove inconsistencies in teaching and learning, and make sure all pupils, but especially those in Year 7, behave well.

Priorities for further improvement

- Support staff to better manage the behaviour of a core group of pupils, mainly in Year 7, and check that this leads to fewer pupils being removed from lessons.
- Make sure that your efforts to improve the attendance of some key groups lead to overall attendance and persistent absence figures in line with the national averages.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the RIB, the chief executive officer of the academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Southend-on-Sea. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Randall

Her Majesty's Inspector