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27 February 2019

Andrew Rees
St Olave's and St Saviour's Grammar School
Goddington Lane
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Kent
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Dear Mr Rees

No formal designation inspection of St Olave's and St Saviour's Grammar School

Following my visit with Adrian Lyons, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Bec Allott and Jenny Gaylor, Ofsted Inspectors, to your school on 6 and 7 February 2019, 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 as a result of Ofsted's risk assessment procedures.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of information relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements, including school policies and the single central record of pre-employment checks. Inspectors gathered a range of first-hand evidence by meeting pupils from each year group, students in the sixth form, staff working at the school, including both teaching and support staff, representatives from the parents' association, subject leaders and pastoral leaders. Inspectors held meetings with the governing body, senior leaders, the local authority school improvement partner and a representative from the Diocese of Rochester. Inspectors also considered the 169 replies to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and carers.

Inspectors visited lessons across the school and spoke with pupils at informal times, for example during breaktimes. Inspectors reviewed the school's work, particularly about the development of pupils' and students' emotional, physical and mental well-

being. Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation relating to pupils' and students' examination entries and their movement from one school year to the next. Inspectors scrutinised local authority audits of the school's work, governors' minutes and school improvement documentation.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time safeguarding is effective and the current overall effectiveness of the school remains outstanding.

Context

The school is a Church of England faith school within the Diocese of Rochester. It selects pupils by ability for entry into Year 7 and Year 12. There are currently 1,093 pupils on roll, of which approximately 40% are students in the sixth form. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or who are eligible for free schools are well below the national averages.

The school was last inspected in March 2014 when it was judged to be outstanding. The school community has experienced significant turbulence since then, particularly in the summer term of 2016/17. This included media coverage of the educational and emotional impact of leaders' then policies, for example on whether students could progress from Year 12 to 13. The local authority commissioned an investigation with five terms of reference, which was published in July 2018.

The previous headteacher was suspended and subsequently left the school at the end of the autumn term 2017. Most of the governing body is new. The current chair of the governing body commenced the role in autumn 2017. As well as the headteacher, the business manager and a small number of staff left the school in the academic year 2017/18. The current headteacher is the substantive headteacher, previously having been a member of the senior leadership team.

Main findings

At the start of this inspection, the inspection team met with you and senior leaders to discuss the pertinent issues about the school and the focus of the inspection.

One key line of enquiry was to check policies and procedures about how decisions on pupils' and students' entries for their GCSE and A-level examinations are made. Inspectors also reviewed pupil and student movement from one year to the next, for example from Year 11 into Year 12 and from Year 12 into Year 13.

Leaders' previous policies up to the 2017 summer GCSE, AS and A-level examinations are now no longer in place. Leaders wrote to parents and carers in November 2017 to clarify school policy about examination entries and progression into Year 13, for example that no student will be prevented from moving into Year 13 as a result of their Year 12 subject grades. Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation and spoke with staff, parents and pupils. They found no evidence of

pupils in Year 11 or sixth-form students in the 2017/18 academic year being 'counselled' to drop subjects or of them forcibly not being entered for any of their examinations or being 'stopped' from moving into Year 13. Inspectors found no evidence from current pupils, students, staff or parents of any deliberate attempt by school leaders in this academic year to manipulate pupils or students into not entering for examinations or leaving the sixth form.

The local authority has also carefully checked that previous practices have ceased. The chair of the governing body was also present during 'results days' last summer to check that school policies were being implemented properly. The consultation on the revised policy for entry into the sixth form for 2019/20 was carried out properly and resulted in some amendments being made to the final policy.

Inspectors also looked in detail at how successful leaders are in proactively establishing an environment that supports pupils emotional, physical and mental well-being. The school's work in this area has been transformed. It is best summed up by pupils and students: without fail, they feel very well supported and listened to. They told inspectors that there had been a complete shift in focus – they felt their well-being was now more of a priority than their academic success. They also said that their 'voice' was being heard much more so than it was previously. Pupils and students spoke highly confidently about the support they receive, including the ability to self-refer to the on-site counselling staff. Lessons are calm and purposeful. Pupils feel challenged but do not feel that they are pushed overly hard by their teachers and/or school leaders.

Staff are well trained on safeguarding. They know the signs that could indicate a potential safeguarding concern and they report concerns quickly should they need to. Leaders share information effectively with staff, such as through the pastoral bulletin. Leaders check carefully and quickly, for example with local authority safeguarding teams, on their proposed actions. As a result, leaders identify, help and manage child protection at the school effectively.

Parents are also highly positive. Their views echoed with one another, sharing comments such as 'bigger focus on well-being', 'emphasis on pastoral care' and 'change has been so positive'. The responses to Parent View suggest high proportions of parents strongly agree that their child is well looked after and safe. At the time of this inspection, 91% of parents who responded to Parent View, would recommend the school.

The school's ethos and culture of academic success at all costs is clearly no longer evident. This is, in part, due to the vision of the new headteacher, who states: 'This school is about happiness and success, in that order.' Parents, students and staff are all confident that things have significantly changed. Collectively, they now have no concerns about the school's work to safeguard pupils (and students) and to put them, not the school, at the heart of decision making.

Pastoral leaders have the time to work together effectively to discuss and design the personal, social, economic and health education (PSHE) curriculum. Pupils and students of all ages speak positively about PSHE, and they give clear examples of what they have learned, for example about relationships, drug and alcohol misuse and staying safe online. Pupils are particularly aware of why their emotional and mental health is important. They talk about a range of ways that they have been taught to manage their mental health. To complement pupils' learning, leaders have put together a comprehensive package of help, including counselling, chaplaincy support and access to external agencies should a pupil or student need it.

Pupils' and students' differences are celebrated. Recent initiatives include the school's work to widen pupils understanding and tolerance of those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Bullying is very rare, as are any incidents of a homophobic or racist nature. Pupils' attendance is high across the school and pupils behave impeccably well.

Inspectors also reviewed the school's careers advice and guidance. Pupils, including students in the sixth form, learn about a range of careers and university pathways. Pupils have an impartial careers interview in Year 8. However, their knowledge and awareness of the full range of opportunities available to them for life after school, for example about apprenticeships and technical education, is too limited.

The quality of support specifically for sixth-form students was also evaluated during the inspection. Students receive considerable advice to help them choose the right A levels and they have opportunities to move between subjects. Leaders monitor students' progress well and any underperformance is identified and managed supportively. Year 12 students are now no longer fearful about losing their place in the sixth form. Pastoral care for sixth-form students is very strong. Leaders know students well. Inspectors reviewed examples of how students are proactively supported by staff to manage difficult personal circumstances. Students have a wide range of enrichment activities to engage in, including sport, music and drama. The extended project supports students to research and present on a variety of personal topics, for example 'ghost organ technology'.

The final aspect of the inspection we evaluated was the effectiveness and transparency of the governing body, particularly in providing challenge and support to leaders. We considered how well leaders at all levels work with staff to secure school improvement.

There has been a huge cultural shift in governance. It has been transformed from what it was previously. Governors have significantly improved their practices on holding leaders to account and their checks on the accuracy of what they are being told. Governors now choose to visit the school, to look and listen for themselves. They now use external views from the school improvement partner (SIP) from the local authority. There is much more transparency about governors' work; minutes of meetings contain more detail and governors ask more questions of leaders.

Governors are 'pushing' rather than being 'pulled' to make improvements to their leadership. New governors with much needed financial knowledge and skills have recently been added to the governing body. Governors are currently finalising their skills audit and training plan.

Staff report that they feel more confident in leadership and that communication is much better. They do retain some concerns about their workload, particularly in relation to the assessment of and reporting on pupils' progress. Parents are happier about the school and they feel that communication is better. Parents and pupils would like to see even more breadth to the curriculum offer, such as a football team and more creative arts in key stage 4. Leaders and governors are fully aware of their priorities for the future. However, at times, leaders' checking of the impact of their work is not consistently thorough. They also acknowledge that the school has been too isolated in the past. Leaders, including governors, have not 'looked out' enough to the best practice of other schools to help them to sharpen their school improvement work still further.

External support

The local authority has commissioned a SIP to work with the school. The SIP's work has a broad remit and includes checking and evaluating leaders' progress in addressing each of the recommendations from the 2018 investigation report. Leaders and officers from the diocese now also visit and work more closely with the school; for example, the director of education is now integral to the management of the headteacher's performance.

Priorities for further improvement

- Leaders, particularly the governing body, build on their recent transformation in leadership and management by:
 - systematically checking on the impact of their improvement strategies
 - drawing on a wider range of best practice from similar and other schools to inform their school improvement work.
- Improve the delivery of high-quality impartial careers guidance, including in the sixth form, to widen pupils' and students' awareness of the full range of career pathways for life after school.

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

Yours sincerely

Sam Hainey

Her Majesty's Inspector