

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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20 June 2019

Mr Colin Douro  
Ellar Carr  
Ellar Carr Road  
Thackley  
Bradford  
West Yorkshire  
BD10 0TD

Dear Mr Douro

### **No formal designation inspection of Ellar Carr**

Following my visit to your school on 12 June 2019, 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 aspects of the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school and the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.

### **Evidence**

As part of this inspection, I scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. I met with you, the consultant headteacher and a range of colleagues who have responsibility for safeguarding and pupil behaviour, including members of the inclusion team. I met with members of the management committee, including the chair, and the member with responsibility for safeguarding. I observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and as they moved from one activity to another. I observed the work of your nurture provision. I spoke to pupils informally. In addition, I formally interviewed eight individual members of staff at random across the course of the inspection to ascertain their views on the safety of the school and the behaviour of pupils. I spoke to other members of staff as I circulated the building.

I considered the school's information relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance, including incidents of exclusion and physical intervention. I also looked at the support that you, and other school leaders, organise and provide for pupils whose circumstances make them more vulnerable.

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

Leadership and management is effective.

Safeguarding is effective.

## **Context**

Ellar Carr is a pupil referral unit (PRU) which admits pupils between the ages of 11 and 16. There are currently 69 pupils on roll. Ellar Carr educates pupils who have identified social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. Many have associated learning difficulties. All of the pupils on roll have an education, health and care plan. Very few pupils return to their home school after moving to Ellar Carr. The school serves a wide geographical area of Bradford and the surrounding area. Around 20% of the pupils currently on roll are in the care of the local authority. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.

Since the previous inspection there has been a change of headteacher and deputy headteacher. A new management committee was appointed in November 2018.

The school was inspected in November 2016 and was judged to be good. The school's arrangements for safeguarding were judged to be effective. Since the inspection, Ofsted has received concerns about the effectiveness of leadership and management and questions of a safeguarding nature. This no-notice inspection focused on the wider issues arising from these concerns.

## **Inspection findings**

Over the past year there have been significant changes to, and some turbulence in, leadership at Ellar Carr. School leaders made changes to the way in which pupils' behaviour is managed. During this corresponding time frame, there have been complaints about the effectiveness of safeguarding and the behaviour of pupils at school.

Having noted a serious decline in the quality of education at Ellar Carr, officers from the local authority have been on the front foot in challenging leaders at school to arrest this decrease in effectiveness. A full and comprehensive safeguarding audit was led by members of the local authority and a raft of subsequent changes made. There is a new management committee in place. A consultant headteacher has been working with the school since November 2018 to add capacity to senior leadership and to guide the senior team. Overall, I judge that leadership is effective. This is because you and other school leaders are being well supported by the management committee and consultant headteacher. You are beginning to move the school forward. Safeguarding arrangements are now effective, partly as a result of the intervention of the local authority.

I held several interviews with individual members of your staff across the course of the inspection. These involved middle leaders, class teachers, teaching assistants

and members of support staff. Many members of staff felt that the behaviour of pupils has improved over the past six to eight months. They talked about the positive impact of additional nurture provision and the work of the inclusion team.

This mirrors inspection evidence. In classrooms, pupils are generally well focused. They concentrate on the task in hand, although they sometimes need a little prompting to begin their work. Around the building, pupils usually respond adequately to directions from members of staff. However, behaviour is less strong when pupils are changing activity or moving between classrooms. Nonetheless, I saw several instances of members of staff successfully calming situations in order to help pupils to refocus or to comply with requests.

You have made sure that systems are in place to log behavioural incidents, including the number of times that staff need to guide pupils physically to keep them and others safe. However, the way in which this information is used to improve procedures is not sharp enough. Although you are aware of the general picture of behaviour at school, you were unable to explain any trends or patterns precisely, or indeed to evaluate the impact of any changes that you have made. For example, the number of fixed-term exclusions remains too high, as is the number of times that physical intervention is used to keep pupils safe. You and members of the inclusion team are aware of the scale of the problem. More crucial, however, is that members of your team were not able to give reasons for this or offer a strong narrative as to how the school is dealing with these issues.

You have made some changes to help to improve the behaviour of pupils, and inspection evidence shows these to be starting to have an impact. Your inclusion team is credited by members of staff as having helped to improve behaviour, and I agree. Their response to any incidents helps to keep everyone safe. In addition, I saw the way in which the new reward system is helping to encourage pupils to stay focused and work hard. In the full knowledge that some pupils in key stage 3 have acute SEMH needs, you have further developed nurture provision to help to meet the needs of these pupils. There have already been some marked improvements in the behaviour of individuals as a result of changes to this provision.

With the support of the local authority and members of the management committee, you have checked that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Current checks on the suitability of adults to work with pupils are thorough. Staff training for safeguarding issues is comprehensive. Risk assessments, first-aid logs, and any recording of incidents are adequate. The team responsible for safeguarding ensures that pupils who are particularly vulnerable receive timely support. Members of staff work well with outside agencies to put plans in place to help these pupils. Staff are increasingly tenacious in their approach. As a result, any pupils with a child protection plan or who are potentially at risk, are safer.

As far as absence is concerned, you have systems in place to ensure that you know where pupils are, in order to assure their safety. As soon as you are aware that a pupil is not in school, members of staff contact families to check reasons for their

absence. Your staff are tenacious in this regard. Home visits are organised if you have any concerns. Changes have been made to site security to alert members of staff to any pupils who leave the site. In addition, you are working with a local PRU to further enhance attendance systems. There are examples of cases where individual pupils have improved their attendance. Nonetheless, rates of attendance are not on an improving trend overall.

There are some examples of teachers weaving safeguarding issues through the curriculum. For example, issues linked to drug use, relationships and sex education, and how to adopt a healthy lifestyle are covered. The pupils with whom I spoke said that they feel safe at school and know how to keep themselves safe. Pupils in key stage 4 have firm plans for their future.

Development plans for the school show that you are thinking about the quality of provision and how to further improve it. Aware that some pupils use racist language, a variety of strategies are in place to help to educate them. You have been increasingly creative in the way in which you use space and spare rooms to support individual pupils. Some pupils are on partial timetables for a short time, to help them to refocus on learning. There is a need, however, to enliven the curriculum so that it ignites the interest of pupils so that their focus in classrooms improves further.

The new management committee is impressive. Members are well informed, committed and skilled. They understand the position of the school, and there is evidence of their work having a positive impact on the quality of provision. Members challenge the school and its leaders. They are helping to steady the ship and are focused on helping to move the school forward in the future.

### **External support**

The local authority has been active in ensuring that you and other school leaders are supported. An example of this is the safeguarding audit that took place in November 2018, and subsequent changes to systems and processes. It also brokered the support of the consultant headteacher who is working with school leaders. The new management committee includes some members who have expertise in safeguarding. In addition, support in improving systems for monitoring and improving attendance has been secured from a local PRU. These packages of support have had a direct impact on the quality of leadership and management overall, and on the effectiveness of safeguarding.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Ensure that the information that is collected about pupils' behaviour is used systematically to improve systems, policies and procedures.
- Ensure that the curriculum sparks the interest of pupils so that their focus in classrooms improves further.
- Improve pupils' rates of attendance.

- Develop a strategy to reduce the number of pupils that receive fixed-term exclusions and the number of times physical intervention is used to ensure the safety of members of the school community.
- Improve pupils' behaviour at times of transition.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Wardle  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**