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20 April 2020

Hilary Morawska  
The Hastings Academy  
Rye Road  
Hastings  
East Sussex  
TN35 5DN

Dear Ms Morawska

### **No formal designation inspection of The Hastings Academy**

Following my visit with Harry Ingham, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 18 March 2020, 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 no formal designation inspections. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector wished to determine the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the school because concerns had been raised with Ofsted.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and a wide range of other documents and policies relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. Records of trust meetings and reports of visits from external advisers and consultants were considered, including those relating to the recent external reviews of safeguarding, attendance and behaviour.

Inspectors also considered leaders' records of pupils' attendance and behaviour. They met formally with you, other senior leaders, teachers, non-teaching staff and a group of pupils. An inspector also spoke informally to small groups of pupils during tutor time and around the school. The lead inspector held meetings with the CEO and other representatives of the University of Brighton Academies Trust (UBAT), including the interim chair of the local governing body known as the local board. Contact was made with the local authority's senior manager for standards and learning effectiveness, whose views regarding the recent reports of visit were considered.

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

Safeguarding is not effective.

Under normal circumstances, the serious concerns I have about safeguarding and attendance in the school would have led me to deem this inspection a section 5 inspection immediately. Since 17 March 2020, due to the corona virus pandemic, Ofsted has suspended routine section 5 inspections of schools, and so I have decided that this is not appropriate. However, I am recommending that the next inspection of the school is a section 5 inspection, and I have set out below the nature of my concerns.

### **Context**

The Hastings Academy is an average-sized secondary school with pupils aged 11 to 16. It is part of the UBAT and works in partnership with The St Leonards Academy in some aspects of provision. The two schools share the same local board. The principal was appointed to the post last year, having previously served as the vice-principal at the school. There has been a period of change in senior leadership at the school and UBAT are currently in the process of restructuring non-teaching and leadership roles across the school.

The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is well above national figures and a higher proportion of pupils than is typical nationally have an education, health and care plan. The school accommodates a specialist resource centre for a small number of pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties, which is funded by the local authority.

Approximately half of the pupils are supported by the pupil premium; this is well above the national average. The proportions of pupils who are from minority ethnic groups, or speak English as an additional language, are below national averages. The school works with a range of alternative providers to offer alternative provision for some key stage 4 pupils for all or part of the week.

The Hastings Academy was last inspected by Ofsted in January 2018, when it was judged to be good.

### **Main Findings**

Published performance information indicates that standards at the school have dipped in recent years. This year there have been significant safeguarding concerns raised at the school, including by the local authority. Together with support from the trust and local authority, you and your team of senior leaders are currently seeking to raise aspirations for your pupils, both academically and pastorally.

You and your senior team have demonstrated resilience and determination over the past few weeks to address a range of safeguarding concerns. Working with consultants from the local authority, you and your staff have begun to address the errors and training requirements identified prior to and during the local authority's external review of safeguarding conducted in January 2020. Together with senior leaders from UBAT, you have sought a range of appropriate external advice and guidance. Additional training and support have begun to assist leaders and staff to address a range of weaknesses and improve safeguarding, behaviour and welfare systems. Additional support staff are being recruited to form a new safeguarding team, but they have not yet started in their posts. The school has not yet successfully addressed all of the action points agreed during these external reviews of safeguarding. The work of leaders and the wider work of the trust to improve safeguarding is far from complete.

Working with senior leaders from UBAT, you are currently restructuring leadership roles across the school. The school's previous designated safeguarding lead (DSL) was absent from school for some time and is now undertaking a different role in the school. Your current DSL has taken over in an interim or 'acting' role, but in the past her other positions of responsibility across the school made significant demands on her time. The school also has two deputy 'acting' DSLs, one of whom is suitably qualified and the other undergoing training. Consequently, this team of DSLs require support to fulfil their roles. Following the local authority review in January, the trust's safeguarding manager had been working in school full-time to support them. However, recently, despite leaders having not fully completed all of the agreed action points identified during this safeguarding review, the trust has reduced this on-site support from full-time to 2 days per week. The trust continues to offer safeguarding support at a distance while additional on-site support is identified.

Leaders do not have a sufficiently robust analysis of attendance data and the impact of absence on the most vulnerable pupils. In addition, inspectors found that significant gaps and inaccuracies in the record-keeping and systems relating to child protection and medical records remain. As a result, leaders do not always spot patterns that could identify potential safeguarding concerns. In addition, records show that leaders have not always ensured that appropriate and timely actions were taken to source help from outside agencies when necessary. Similarly, weak record-keeping has meant that staff have not always followed the trust's first aid and medical policy and procedures for the administration of medicines to pupils. These issues mean that currently the school is not meeting its statutory responsibilities in terms of safeguarding. Oversight of safeguarding from UBAT has not been strong enough. Senior managers agree with inspectors that immediate full-time support and urgent work are needed to address this.

Teachers report that there have been improvements to behaviour and provision for pupils with SEND in the school. However, pupils report that they are concerned about bullying in the school and they are not confident that staff always listen to

their concerns or respond to resolve them. Similar significant concerns are echoed in the small number of responses to Ofsted's Parent View. The school opened its 'Pride' provision, offering part-time timetables for pupils whose behaviour means that they are at risk of exclusion. However, leaders were not clear about the amount of time that pupils spend there or what safeguarding provision is in place when they are not in school. In addition, inspectors found significant weaknesses in the school's current systems for communication and record-keeping relating to behaviour. As a result, leaders do not have a clear analysis of the impact of their work to reduce bullying and incidents of racism and homophobia.

UBAT's trustees are responsible for the educational performance of the school and monitoring safeguarding arrangements. The school's local board, shared with The St Leonards Academy, has responsibilities which include monitoring pupils' well-being, complaints and concerns. This local board has not been able to meet these responsibilities in terms of pupils' welfare and safeguarding. It currently has five vacancies and the chair's role is being undertaken by an executive director of UBAT as an interim measure. The interim chair is acting as the link member for safeguarding on the local board and works alongside school leaders to check the quality of safeguarding arrangements in the school. The CEO of the trust has taken steps to ensure that trustees and the new members of the local board are aware of shortcomings, but there is much to do to ensure that they fulfil their responsibilities effectively.

Appropriate safeguarding and qualifications checks are made on all staff, and leaders now maintain a log of the checks that have been made and the actions that have been taken in response to the local authority's advice. Nearly all of the staff and governors have received additional training this term which meets requirements and is appropriate to their role in school. Induction packages have ensured that the new recruits we met are confident in aspects of safeguarding relevant to their roles. Consequently, this term most staff know what to do if they have a concern about any pupil. They can describe routines for reporting any concerns and seeking support from the acting designated safeguarding lead where appropriate. They understand their specific responsibilities relating to e-safety and reporting any suspected cases of abuse or radicalisation. However, records show that a minority of staff have not completed up-to-date safeguarding training. While leaders have improved the availability of training and information, more needs to be done to check that this is completed by all staff.

Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe through personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. This year, leaders have worked with the local authority and trust to enrich their planning for this PSHE curriculum. Activities have been planned to outline and address national and local area concerns pertinent to the pupils, for example e-safety, drugs awareness, radicalisation, mental health issues and anti-bullying. In addition, teachers were keen to praise the opportunities offered for several pupils in key stage 4 to enable access to a range of additional provision

which supports them learning improved skills and interactions with adults. However, leaders' records indicate that, while staff are meant to accompany pupils during visits to some of the alternative providers, this has not always been the case. In addition, records do not demonstrate that leaders have taken effective actions to follow up on poor attendance at alternative providers. Consequently, safeguarding requirements are not always being met when these pupils are off-site.

### **External support**

School leaders and senior managers from UBAT are currently working with outside partners to review the school's safeguarding systems, and the trust is arranging for new leadership of safeguarding provision. The trust has recently engaged a lead principal from another school to support senior leaders with this and other aspects of school improvement. Working with safeguarding advisers from the local authority, detailed action plans have been drawn up to achieve specific, measurable and time-related improvements to safeguarding systems. Governors and trustees are committed to continuing to work with these advisers during this transition period when leadership is being restructured, and beyond, to support the newly appointed safeguarding and behaviour teams during their induction. However, the local authority has expressed frustration that the action plans that they agreed with the trust have not been followed in terms of ensuring that an additional DSL is at the school full-time during this transition period.

Safeguarding leaders attend multi-agency meetings and engage in regular communication with outside agencies. Inspectors recognise that there have been some improvements to safeguarding systems and the school's use of risk assessments recently, as a result of the local authority and trust senior managers working together to support school leaders. However, leaders and the trust agree that this work is not yet complete.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

Leaders should immediately address the following serious safeguarding concerns that do not meet statutory requirements and would, in normal circumstances, have led to this inspection being deemed a section 5 inspection.

- Ensure the immediate availability of a full-time on-site DSL to serve in the senior leadership team and support the acting DSL in school, as had previously been agreed with the local authority. This support should remain in place while the vice-principal completes his training to become the new DSL and should continue to support him, and his newly appointed safeguarding team of support staff, until systems in the school are secure.
- Take immediate action to ensure that electronic safeguarding record-keeping accurately identifies those pupils and families who would benefit from early help, pupils who are being supported as a child in need and those that have a child protection plan. Senior leaders, trustees and local board members need to ensure

that these records and safeguarding systems are sufficiently reliable and thorough to ensure that the school contributes towards multi-agency working in a timely and appropriate manner in line with statutory guidance.

- Maintain accurate record-keeping relating to first aid and the administration of medication to pupils. Staff need to ensure that the school follows procedures and protocols outlined in the trust's first aid and medical policy.
- Confirm that all alternative providers are either suitably registered, or ensure that members of staff are always present when pupils attend these providers for their part-time courses, in order to meet safeguarding requirements. Leaders must ensure that attendance at these providers is regularly monitored and that appropriate actions are taken following any absences.
- Senior leaders, trustees and local board members should ensure that the school's 'Pride' provision meets statutory guidance for the use of part-time timetables and exclusions. Staff and senior leaders need to develop a shared vision for the use of this resource for pupils on part-time timetables and ensure that suitable safeguarding checks are made when these pupils are not in school.

In addition, leaders should prioritise addressing the following concerns relating to attendance and behaviour.

- Improve the monitoring of attendance for all groups of pupils, particularly the most vulnerable groups of pupils and those on part-time timetables.
- Ensure all bullying incidents are accurately recorded, including the use of homophobic and racist language. These records should be suitably thorough so that leaders can, over time, analyse and review the impact of their behaviour policy and systems.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for East Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Newberry

**Her Majesty's Inspector**