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13 January 2021

Michael Stimpson  
Headteacher  
St Michael's Catholic Grammar School  
Nether Street  
North Finchley  
London  
N12 7NJ

Dear Mr Stimpson

### **No formal designation inspection of St Michael's Catholic Grammar School**

Following my visit with Brenda McLaughlin and Lisa Strong, Her Majesty's Inspectors, to your school on 10 December 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 inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector wished to determine the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the school as concerns had been raised with Ofsted.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding arrangements. We met with you and other school leaders, including those with responsibility for safeguarding. We also held meetings with members of staff and groups of pupils. We had telephone calls with the chair of governors and two representatives from the local authority.

We also looked at a wide range of documentation, including school policies, minutes of governing body meetings, the staff code of conduct and records of pupils' behaviour.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

## **Context**

- The previous inspection took place in February 2008 when the school was judged to be outstanding.
- The school is undergoing a phase of expansion. Year 7 and Year 8 have moved from three- to four-form entry. Building work is taking place to accommodate the increasing numbers of pupils.
- Boys have been admitted to the sixth form since 2009. Years 7 to 11 continue to be girls only.
- Governors have recently amended the admissions policy to increase the opportunities for disadvantaged pupils to attend the school.

## **Main Findings**

Since you took up your post in 2017, you have prioritised raising the profile of safeguarding across the school. Leaders regularly review the school's safeguarding policy and practice, engaging productively with external partners to assure the quality of the school's procedures. Governors have strengthened their oversight of safeguarding matters so that they regularly scrutinise and follow up the impact of the leaders' work. Leaders take steps to develop practice when you recognise that improvements are needed.

Leaders ensure that the child protection and safeguarding policy reflects up-to-date statutory requirements. Staff receive regular safeguarding training so that they know their responsibilities, for example with regard to the 'Prevent' duty and for the referral of any concerns. You seek, and respond swiftly to, feedback from staff. For example, you recently introduced more mental health training for staff. You have also made helpful amendments to the school's code of conduct, including aspects relating to safeguarding.

Leaders make sure that all the required employment checks are made of staff and recorded accurately on the single central record. An appropriate number of leaders, including governors, have completed safer recruitment training.

Leaders are highly considerate of pupils' well-being. Teachers provide a wide range of opportunities across the curriculum to promote pupils' mental health, emotional well-being and safety. In subjects such as personal, social, health and economic education and citizenship, pupils learn how to recognise and avoid risks and to keep safe. Teachers provide pupils with guidance on the importance of working safely online.

Leaders make links with outside organisations, such as the National Health Service and the local authority, to raise pupils' awareness of how to access help and advice

if they have any concerns. The support available to pupils in and out of school is promoted strongly through assemblies, displays and on the school website.

In response to the expansion of the school, you are increasing the size of the pastoral teams working with pupils in each key stage. This includes an additional learning mentor and another school counsellor. Pupils who spoke to inspectors were very confident that there are adults in the school they would go to if they had any worries, and that they would receive help to resolve their concerns. However, pupils from key stage 3 were less clear than older pupils about the extent of the support available to them.

Leaders are suitably qualified to oversee the safeguarding of pupils, including two designated safeguarding leads (DSLs). Leaders' records and staff's responses indicate that staff are alert to safeguarding concerns about pupils. Staff know and use the school's referral procedures. These largely comprise conversations with, or emails to, the DSLs. Leaders' records and staff's accounts indicate that the DSLs receive referrals in a timely manner and follow them up swiftly. However, there is too much reliance on the small size of the school and positive relationships between staff and pupils in ensuring that communications are conveyed appropriately. There is not a sufficiently clear, systematic and consistent approach to the referral process, or of the recording and secure storage of safeguarding information about pupils.

There is also too much reliance on the two DSLs to retain and progress all safeguarding information. There is limited capacity within the leadership of safeguarding to ensure that procedures are as efficient and thorough as they should be, especially as the number of pupils is increasing. There is no evidence that a child has been at risk due to these weaker aspects of the school's safeguarding systems.

### **External support**

Leaders engage positively with outside organisations, including the local authority, to support safeguarding policy and practice in the school. This work includes liaison with professional agencies working with individual pupils and their families, as well as enabling pupils in school to access information and support when needed.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Rapidly develop and embed new systems for the maintenance of safeguarding records so that there is a clear, chronological tracking of cases, a consistent approach to communications and the secure storage of confidential information.
- Ensure all pupils, and especially those in key stage 3, are aware of how to access the range of provision available in and out of school to support their well-being.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Archdiocese of Westminster, the regional schools commissioner and the

director of children's services for Barnet. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Carter-Fraser

**Her Majesty's Inspector**