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Peter Gillett  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Gillett

### **Additional monitoring inspection of Hertswood Academy**

Following my inspection with Cindy Impey, Her Majesty's Inspector, of your school on 23 February 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken to provide education to all pupils during the current circumstances.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 (2) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended) and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for visiting schools while routine inspections remain temporarily suspended. It was additional to the usual monitoring process for schools that are judged to require improvement.

This monitoring inspection took place on site because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector had significant concerns about standards of safeguarding at the school. The school was judged to require improvement at its previous section 5 inspection, which took place in September 2019.

Having considered all the evidence and taking into account the impact of COVID-19 on the school, I am of the opinion that at this time:

**Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances.**

**Safeguarding is not effective.**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- ensure that all staff have a secure understanding of statutory guidance in respect of the most serious safeguarding allegations and how to respond to them
- ensure that safeguarding-related information is always shared with external agencies in accordance with statutory guidance, the school's policies and local protocols
- develop the capacity of the governing body to hold leaders to account with respect to their fulfilment of the school's safeguarding responsibilities.

### **Context**

- Since the previous inspection, a new deputy headteacher has been appointed to lead the school's work to promote positive behaviour and attitudes. Two new governors have been appointed.
- During the 2020 autumn term, 37% of pupils experienced periods of remote education because of COVID-19. Pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 were disproportionately affected by this.
- At the time of this inspection, 94% of pupils were being educated at home. Almost a third of vulnerable pupils, and just over one quarter of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan are attending school on site.

### **Main findings**

- Leaders have not consistently followed statutory procedures when sharing information about potential safeguarding issues with external agencies. Important information has not always been shared quickly enough with all those who need to know it. Key staff lack awareness of statutory guidance about how to manage some of the most serious safeguarding-related allegations. Leaders have not developed appropriate procedures for staff to follow if such allegations arise.
- Governors' arrangements for monitoring safeguarding are not rigorous enough. This limits governors' ability to challenge leaders effectively. Governors have been unaware of weaknesses in aspects of the school's safeguarding provision. During the inspection, governors shared appropriate ideas about how to improve their oversight.
- Leaders make the necessary checks before appointing staff. Although safeguarding procedures have not been followed consistently, staff usually follow the relevant processes when reporting their concerns about the welfare of pupils to safeguarding leaders. Child protection records are appropriately

detailed and well maintained. Staff understand risks in the local area. The school's curriculum helps pupils both to understand these, and how to stay safe and healthy.

- Leaders have made sure that all pupils have been able to access the curriculum during this period. You have provided pupils with suitable devices, where necessary, to enable them to learn online. Your initial monitoring indicated that pupils in some year groups were more likely to engage well and complete their work than others. You made changes so that pupils receive more help when completing their work. You are also checking that pupils are attending each and every lesson. These changes are promoting improved engagement.
- Teachers are online during the day, checking work as pupils complete it. They are usually quick to identify pupils who are struggling and provide them with the help they need. Pupils can watch recorded explanations or examples. They return to these if they do not initially understand something or later forget it. Teachers regularly check what pupils can remember. Pupils told us that the work they do usually helps them to build on their existing knowledge, or to learn important things off by heart.
- You are continuing to teach the full range of subjects. Teachers have thought carefully about how best to teach more practical subjects, such as art, at this time. In most respects, adaptations to the curriculum and to teaching methods are helping pupils to develop their knowledge and practise their skills in these subjects.
- Leaders have reviewed the curriculum in each subject since the school's previous inspection. You introduced new curriculum plans in September 2020. These identify the 'big ideas' and most important subject content for pupils to be able to think about, remember and revisit over time. You have started to review how well these plans are being implemented so that you can make any necessary changes. You also want pupils to use what they know in one subject to aid their learning in another. Work to develop pupils' ability to make connections between different subjects is at an early stage.
- You have done much to maintain positive relationships with families during this period. This has helped leaders to identify pupils who are vulnerable and to target the right support for them. You have strongly encouraged these pupils to attend school. You make daily checks on the engagement and well-being of those pupils whose parents prefer for them to remain at home.
- You have made clear to pupils that all of the work they do counts, even though public examinations are not taking place in the normal way this year. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. Your monitoring indicates that pupils in Year 11 and students in Year 13 remain engaged and motivated. They typically complete their work on time and take pride in it.

- You are adapting the curriculum so that pupils with SEND are typically able to learn the same things as their peers. You have provided staff with additional training which is helping them to support pupils, including those with autism or individuals with social, emotional or mental health issues. Pupils with SEND who have been learning at home have benefited from support from your staff who know them well.
- Since the school's previous inspection, governors have improved their monitoring of the school's curriculum. They have commissioned external support, both to help leaders make the improvements, and to inform governors' judgements about their effectiveness. Governors have regularly challenged leaders to ensure that all pupils access education during this period of national lockdown.
- Local authority leaders have been providing helpful support to leaders and governors in their work to adapt, implement and review the school's curriculum. A rolling programme of subject reviews has started to provide leaders with an external evaluation of the extent to which recent curriculum changes are having the intended impact.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was carried out on site due to concerns about safeguarding. We held meetings with senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, pupils, two members of the governing body and representatives of the local authority. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown, and their arrangements for safeguarding.

We also sampled pupils' work, made visits to lessons on site and sampled recorded lessons. We considered the school's record of pre-employment checks, and other documents linked to the school's safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We sampled minutes of governing body meetings and other documentation. We considered 105 submissions to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 50 free text responses, as well as 71 responses to the Ofsted staff survey.

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

Yours sincerely

Jason Howard  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**