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Sharon Young  
Headteacher  
Brompton Hall School  
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North Yorkshire  
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Dear Ms Young

### **No formal designation inspection of Brompton Hall School**

Following my visit with Michael Wardle, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 10 to 11 February 2021, 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**

We scrutinised the single central record of checks on the suitability of adults to work with children, along with other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We met with the headteacher, senior leaders and teaching and support staff. We met with pupils from all year groups and toured the school with senior staff, following the school's current safety procedures. One of us held a video call with the chair of the governing body and a separate call with two representatives from the local authority. We also held telephone conversations with four parents and carers.

We scrutinised a range of school policies relating to safeguarding. We looked at the school's records of behaviour, bullying and the use of physical restraint. We also scrutinised the school's accident logs and minutes of governing body meetings.

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

**Safeguarding is not effective.**

**Context**

Brompton Hall School is a smaller than average-sized school. The school caters for boys with social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Places at the school are allocated through North Yorkshire local authority. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is higher the national average. The school offers residential provision for some pupils during the school week. The number of residential pupils has declined in recent years and the number of day pupils has increased. A new chair of governors has been appointed since the previous inspection. A new assistant headteacher has been appointed with responsibility for safeguarding and behaviour, and is scheduled to take up their role at the end of February 2021.

At the time of the inspection, around half of pupils were attending school. Some pupils are currently accessing education remotely as parents do not wish them to attend school during the current period of national restrictions. Other pupils are attending school on a part-time rota system. Leaders explained that this is to manage staff-to-pupil ratios during the period of national restrictions.

**Main Findings**

Leaders have not ensured that all appropriate safeguarding checks are carried out on adults. This means that leaders cannot be certain that staff and governors are safe to work with children and young people. Leaders do not demonstrate an appropriate understanding of the necessary checks on the suitability of staff and governors. For example, leaders were unaware of the requirement to check on whether governors are disqualified from holding office, or how to carry out appropriate checks on those adults who have lived or worked abroad. Until the inspection, leaders had not undertaken statutory checks to ensure whether any of the school's teaching staff have been prohibited from teaching. Checks that have been undertaken on staff are not recorded in a single central record, as defined in the Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance. Leaders have not ensured that members of staff responsible for carrying out safer recruitment processes have been trained to carry out this role effectively. Senior leaders and governors have not maintained appropriate oversight of this aspect of the school's work. Leaders took steps to address some of the gaps in the checks on the suitability of staff by the end of the inspection.

Leaders have not carried out the necessary checks on alternative education providers and on work experience placements to ensure that they are safe for pupils to attend. Leaders have not obtained written confirmation that appropriate safeguarding checks have been carried out on individuals working at the alternative

establishments or work experience placements. Leaders incorrectly assumed that this is the local authority's responsibility. During the inspection, leaders took steps to rectify some of the omissions in their checks on the suitability of alternative education and work experience providers.

Serious behaviour incidents have increased at the school. Older pupils spoken to by inspectors reported that younger pupils regularly use inappropriate homophobic and/or racist language. The school's own record-keeping shows an increase in the use of behaviour sanctions and physical restraint. Leaders' vision for improving pupils' behaviour is not translating into practice. Leaders express an intention to move towards more therapeutic responses to improving pupils' behaviour. However, leaders have not taken the necessary action to make this happen. There is an over-reliance on sanctions and physical restraint, rather than considering the provision and support that pupils need to improve their behaviour.

Although leaders are in the process of developing new spaces to be used when pupils are in crisis, they have not ensured that all of the rooms used are fit for purpose or used appropriately to help pupils to improve their behaviour. In particular, one of the rooms used when pupils are withdrawn from lessons is a small, cold space where pupils are, at times, restrained. A few younger pupils report feeling upset and anxious if they are taken to the room and indicated that sometimes they are held there until late in the evening. Leaders told us that the use of this room has been a concern to them for some time. Despite this, the space continues to be used by staff to manage pupils. Leaders have not taken suitable action to address this. Records do not consistently show how long pupils spend in the room, nor how staff have taken action to help pupils to work through or understand the impact of their behaviour. The purpose of this room is not outlined in the school's behaviour policy, as set out in DfE guidance.

Staff receive regular safeguarding training and updates. Staff talk positively about the training they have received to help them to support pupils' mental health and well-being and to recognise the impact of adverse childhood experiences. Despite this, more work needs to be done to ensure that staff put this training into practice so that it has a positive impact on pupils and their behaviour.

Governors do not recognise the significant weaknesses of the school. Governors know that serious behaviour incidents and the use of physical restraint have increased. Nevertheless, they have not challenged leaders to explain why this is the case and what is being done to improve this for pupils. As a result, they do not have an accurate view of the effectiveness of leadership and management, or the urgency with which some issues need to be addressed.

Leaders have reviewed the school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum. They have increased the focus on educating pupils about online safety due to more pupils learning online from home. However, older pupils do not

understand the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. The PSHE curriculum does not address pupils' social and emotional needs effectively.

Pupils who spoke with inspectors told us that they can talk to their key worker if they have any worries or concerns. Pupils talk positively about the support they receive from the school counsellor, who is based in the school's well-being hub.

The small number of parents and carers who we talked to hold positive views about the school and the support their children receive.

### **External support**

The local authority recently carried out a review of the school which identified a range of concerns. The local authority has attempted to work with leaders and governors to implement the recommendations from the review. However, leaders have challenged some aspects of the local authority review findings. At the time of the inspection, limited work has been taken to address the action points.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- checks on the suitability of adults to work with pupils are undertaken in line with statutory guidance
- an accurate single central record of safeguarding checks on adults is maintained
- suitable checks on alternative education providers and work experience placements are carried out before pupils start their placement
- information gathered about pupils' behaviour and the use of sanctions and physical restraint is used to accurately evaluate the quality of the school's provision
- pupils are supported to improve their behaviour so that the number of serious behaviour incidents and the instances of racist and homophobic language reduce
- the purpose and use of withdrawal rooms is clearly outlined in the school's behaviour policy and accurate records are kept so that leaders and governors can monitor and evaluate the use of such provision
- staff training is put into practice and has a positive impact on the quality of the school's provision to support pupils to improve their behaviour
- the PSHE curriculum helps pupils to understand the range of risks they may face both online and offline, including the risks of radicalisation and extremism
- governors have the necessary knowledge and skills to challenge leaders effectively and hold them to account.

Under normal circumstances, we would treat this inspection as an inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005, due to the serious concerns identified. However, because routine inspections are suspended, we will prioritise the school for a section 5 inspection when routine inspections resume.

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

Yours sincerely

Michele Costello

**Her Majesty's Inspector**