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14 September 2021

Emma Robins  
Principal  
Graham School  
Woodlands Drive  
Scarborough  
YO12 6QW

Dear Miss Robins

### **No formal designation inspection of Graham School**

Following my visit with Matthew Vellensworth, Her Majesty's Inspector, and James McGrath, Ofsted inspector, to your school on 20 July 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and the time you took to discuss your school.

This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for no formal designation (NFD) inspections. 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.

We do not give graded judgements on NFD inspections. However, if we find some evidence that overall standards may be declining, but where no serious concerns have been identified, then the next inspection will normally be a section 5 inspection and will be brought forward. If we have serious concerns, we will deem the NFD inspection to be a section 5 inspection immediately.

### **Evidence**

We scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We met with the designated safeguarding leader (DSL). We also met with you and other senior leaders, the executive principal, chief executive officer, members of the local governing committee (LGC), the chair of trustees and other trustees, the special educational needs coordinator, the curriculum leader for personal, social, health and economic

(PSHE) education, safeguarding leaders from the trust, teachers, support staff and pupils.

I spoke on the telephone with the local area designated officer and reviewed the minutes of the LGC and trustee meetings. We reviewed records of staff training on child protection and the prevention of radicalisation and extremism, risk assessments, personnel files, safeguarding logs and the accident book.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

### **Context**

Graham School is an average-size school. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils on roll is above the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is in line with the national average. The school is part of the Hope Learning Trust. A new principal took up post in September 2019. Two vice-principals have been appointed in the last 18 months. The school has been managing high levels of infection recently due to COVID-19 (coronavirus). This led to the school closing to all pupils between Friday 25 June and 6 July 2021.

### **Main Findings**

Leaders, governors and trustees are reflective when it comes to the safeguarding systems and processes in school. They frequently ask questions of themselves and each other to ensure that their actions are contributing to keeping pupils safe. This is evidenced in the minutes of LGC and trustee meetings, and in the PSHE curriculum, which leaders adapt and refine based on emerging safeguarding risks. Pupils regularly revisit increasingly complex safeguarding themes as they mature and move up through the school. In this way, pupils' understanding of e-safety, sexting, peer-on-peer abuse and consent is strong.

The DSL is suitably trained. He is passionate and determined to do what is right for all pupils, especially the most vulnerable. Recently, the number of safeguarding leaders has increased. There are now two deputy safeguarding leaders who work effectively together to support and reinforce the work of the DSL.

Staff attend regular safeguarding training. Those spoken to during the inspection have an appropriate understanding of relevant safeguarding risks, including domestic violence. Staff understand the whistleblowing procedures in school. They know what to do should they have a safeguarding concern and are required to report it to leaders, governors or trustees. Leaders are currently investigating different approaches to safeguarding training so that they are able to evaluate its effectiveness by checking how well staff understand and apply new ways of working.

The staff spoken to during the inspection were positive about the culture of safeguarding across the school. They say that leaders take safeguarding concerns seriously. Furthermore, staff say the training they have received and the resources they are given help them teach and support pupils effectively during PSHE and religious education lessons.

The majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's inspection questionnaire, Parent View, state that, in their opinion, the school's leaders and staff do all they can to ensure pupils are safe.

Pupils' behaviour is improving. The proportion of pupils who receive a fixed-term exclusion has reduced significantly since the school opened. Pupils say that bullying is rare. Most pupils are confident staff would take instances of bullying seriously and deal with it in a firm and effective manner. A very small proportion of the pupils spoken to said they would like staff to 'check-in' on them more often once staff are made aware of pupils' bullying concerns.

A small minority of the school's most vulnerable pupils attend school on a part-time basis. Despite leaders' best efforts to reintegrate pupils back to school, some pupils have missed large parts of their education for too long. A small number of pupils with SEND attend alternative education provision. While leaders conduct daily checks on pupils' attendance, they do not evaluate the appropriateness of the setting or pupils' progress as often as they should to ensure pupils' diverse needs are effectively supported.

Leaders continue to refine the processes and systems they use in school to record and respond to safeguarding incidents. Staff use a popular software program to record all safeguarding concerns. However, leaders have not considered fully how staff should record information systematically so that it does not become unwieldy. Consequently, the vast amount of safeguarding information held on file is not as easy to navigate, review or respond to as it could be.

Governors and trustees have an in-depth understanding of the school's strengths and areas to develop that relate to safeguarding. Governors ensure that they are appropriately trained to ask searching questions of leaders. Governors access a wide range of safeguarding training at induction and throughout their tenure. This, and effective guidance from the trust, is helping to ensure governors have the necessary knowledge and skills to hold leaders to account when it comes to all aspects of safeguarding and pupils' welfare.

### **External support**

Leaders have commissioned two external audits to review the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the school. The most recent audit was at the start of

July 2021. Leaders have responded swiftly to address the safeguarding recommendations from each report.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

Leaders and governors should ensure that they:

- reduce the number and length of time pupils spend on part-time timetables so all pupils benefit from the improving quality of education available to them at school
- frequently review pupils' placements at alternative provision so they have a better understanding of how well pupils are doing and whether or not the placements continue to meet pupils' evolving needs
- record safeguarding information in a systematic and precise way so they are able to review and respond to emerging concerns swiftly and effectively.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the CEO of the Hope Learning Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Lee Elliott

**Her Majesty's Inspector**