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Keith Grainger
Principal
Garth Hill College
Bull Lane
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Dear Mr Grainger

No formal designation inspection of Garth Hill College

Following my visit to your school on 3 and 4 November 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.

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 as a section 5 inspection immediately.

Evidence

I scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. I met with the principal, other leaders, groups of staff, groups of pupils, and a representative of the local authority. I had separate telephone conversations with the nominated governor for safeguarding and two leaders of the alternative provision the school uses.

I also considered a range of other evidence, including leaders' audit and self-assessment of safeguarding arrangements, governors' minutes, records of safeguarding incidents,

including the actions leaders have taken, records of pupils' attendance and behaviour incidents, parents' responses to Parent View, and responses to Ofsted's confidential surveys for staff and pupils. I visited The Rise, the school's specialist provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

There are 1488 pupils on roll. Of these, a small proportion attend off-site alternative provision at College Hall, The Cottage and The Link, which are all providers checked and recommended by the local authority. The proportion of pupils with SEND who attend the school is higher than average. The school has a specialist provision for pupils with autism spectrum disorder called The Rise, which is on another site near to the main school. 52 pupils with SEND currently attend this provision.

Main Findings

Policies and processes to keep pupils safe are strong. Leaders are knowledgeable and have good levels of expertise about safeguarding. They rightly prioritise safeguarding, understanding the range of challenging contexts and issues that pupils encounter. Leaders make sure that any concerns are recorded swiftly and acted upon effectively. Good liaison with external agencies is underpinned by leaders' persistent tenacity to make sure appropriate support is arranged for pupils. Leaders maintain close oversight of pupils who attend alternative provision. The right checks are in place to make sure staff at the school are suitable to work with young people. Leaders provide regular training for staff, including about the latest safeguarding requirements and guidance. The internal process leaders use to check all staff have fully understood this vital information is not yet completely effective.

Most pupils feel safe at school and enjoy attending. They feel the school promotes equality well, including respecting others. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and boundaries, as well as other aspects of how to keep themselves safe. Older pupils have appreciated recent work they have done on the dangers of peer-on-peer sexual harassment and abuse. They do not feel that such issues are a part of the prevailing culture of the school. Leaders have reviewed what pupils are taught about keeping themselves safe. They have recently introduced a new curriculum for pupils of all ages which will improve this further. The school actively encourages pupils to come and talk to someone if they have a problem or a worry. Most pupils feel this is effective. However, not all pupils know who they would go to. Some pupils are not convinced that their concerns would be dealt with promptly or seriously enough.

Teachers and support staff understand the school's processes and policies, and put these into practice well. They are knowledgeable about the safeguarding risks that pupils face. Staff know how to identify and report issues, including if they have any concerns about

another member of staff. While most staff are confident about how to find out what has happened because of a concern they have raised, not all are.

Leaders make sure that incidents are reported properly and addressed swiftly and effectively, including in cases which are sensitive and complex. Although numbers are not high, there has been a rise in the number of serious concerns pupils have reported, including about alleged racism, sexual harassment and transphobia. This is because pupils feel more confident about coming forward, processes are stronger and staff are better equipped to identify and deal with issues. Staff at many levels work as a team to support pupils well. Communication and recording of important information are good. Leaders arrange, monitor and coordinate effective help for pupils.

Governors maintain an overview of how the school keeps pupils safe. They ensure the school's policy is compliant and updated annually. Safeguarding is a regular agenda item at governors' meetings and they receive training. Leaders regularly report to governors. The nominated governor is knowledgeable and monitors the school's practice, including leaders' annual section 11 audit of safeguarding arrangements. However, this audit is not currently part of leaders' annual report to governors, as it should be. Aspects of governors' monitoring of how the school complies with statutory requirements lack specificity.

Additional support

Local authority officers work closely with the school, providing leaders with good advice and support. Officers ensure that leaders complete the annual section 11 safeguarding audit and review the school's submission. Senior leaders from the school regularly attend network meetings organised by the local authority. These help leaders stay up to date with current guidance and developments in practice. The local authority recognises a range of strengths in the school's approaches to safeguarding, which are often shared with other schools. Local authority governor services provide training for the governing body.

Priorities for further improvement

- Make sure that all pupils feel confident that they can report any worries they might have and that these concerns will be dealt with effectively.
- Tighten leaders' internal systems to ensure that all staff have read and fully understood statutory guidance about keeping pupils safe in school.
- Sharpen governors' monitoring of the school's compliance with statutory requirements, including by making sure that leaders' annual report to governors about safeguarding incorporates the school's annual audit of safeguarding arrangements.

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

Yours sincerely

Matthew Haynes
Her Majesty's Inspector