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Michael Reeves
Headteacher
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Waldron Road
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Dear Mr Reeves

No formal designation inspection of Garratt Park School

Following my visit with Amanda Carter-Fraser, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 14 and 15 December 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 was concerned about the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school, including safeguarding arrangements.

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

We scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We met with you and other leaders, including those with specific responsibility for safeguarding, pupils' welfare, behaviour and attendance. We also held meetings with members of staff and groups of pupils and visited some lessons. We met with the chair of governors and four other governors. We had telephone conversations with representatives of the local authority and the school's safer schools

police officer. We spoke with some parents and carers at the school gate when they dropped off and collected their children. We also looked at a wide range of documents, including school policies and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance. The local authority's most recent review of some aspects of safeguarding arrangements, including recommendations, was also considered.

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

Safeguarding is effective

Context

Garratt Park School is a special secondary school with 206 pupils aged 11 to 19 on roll. The number of boys attending far exceeds the number of girls. The school caters for pupils who have moderate learning difficulties, a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder or speech, language and communication needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. A small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who join and leave the school other than at the usual times is also above the national average. Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.

The previous inspection took place in February 2019, when the school was judged to be good. A new deputy headteacher, who is also the designated safeguarding leader (DSL), was appointed in April 2019. The new chair of the governing body took up her post in September 2020. She was formerly the vice-chair.

Main Findings

Leaders and governors have recently made a number of changes to strengthen safeguarding and child protection arrangements. For example, following an increase in reported safeguarding concerns, governors have expanded the capacity of the safeguarding leadership team. This team now consists of five leaders, including the DSL. All have undertaken suitable training and qualifications, as required for their roles. Senior members of the team are experienced and knowledgeable. Newer team members are well supported and are beginning to gain further experience and expertise. The new team works together effectively. The team makes sure that pupils who may be at risk are identified and receive the help and protection that they need.

You and your team know that pupils' additional needs mean that they can be particularly vulnerable, for instance, to grooming and exploitation. Through regular training, staff learn how to recognise signs that a pupil is at risk and needs help. Leaders emphasise the need for an 'it could happen here' attitude. For example, they make sure that staff are alert to indicators of peer-on-peer abuse and harmful sexual behaviour.

Leaders have also taken effective steps to strengthen the recording of safeguarding

concerns and behaviour incidents. Clear and suitably detailed record-keeping enables leaders to build a full picture of pupils' needs. Leaders and staff make effective use of all the information they gather on pupils' safety and welfare. For example, they make links between concerns about pupils' behaviour and potential safeguarding concerns. They analyse trends and look for emerging patterns. As a result, leaders are quick to identify circumstances that need further exploration. They do not delay in taking appropriate action when it is needed. Leaders seek advice from and make timely referrals to external agencies. As a result, leaders secure the right level of help for pupils at the earliest possible stage. This includes support available from professionals in children's social care, the local authority and the police.

Staff help pupils to understand what are and what are not appropriate behaviours in different contexts and situations. Leaders have given careful thought to the content taught in the personal, social, health and economic education programme. This programme also incorporates relationships, health and sex education. Pupils are taught to understand risk, how to keep themselves safe and where they can get help. They learn about and discuss many different themes and scenarios. These include, for instance, healthy relationships, consent, types of abusive behaviour, and substance misuse. Staff are skilled in adapting teaching to meet pupils' specific needs.

Pupils said that they trust members of the pastoral, behavioural and safeguarding teams. They feel confident to raise their concerns and ask for help, for themselves and on behalf of others. Pupils are provided with a wide range of extra pastoral support, including for their mental health. For instance, should pupils need to, they can speak with a counsellor, social worker, learning mentors and therapeutic staff.

There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere in the school. Staff attend regular training on behaviour management. They use de-escalation skills effectively and know how to help pupils feel calm and secure. Staff use their knowledge and expertise consistently well. Use of physical intervention is rare.

Governors visit the school regularly and are knowledgeable. They have an especially strong understanding of leaders' work to support pupils' behaviour and welfare. More recently, governors have taken clear steps to sharpen their understanding and oversight of safeguarding arrangements. They are working closely with school leaders and staff. For example, they have introduced new approaches to check how well safeguarding arrangements are working in practice. However, some aspects of this work are relatively new and not fully embedded.

The safeguarding policy reflects current statutory requirements. Leaders make sure that they make all the required pre-employment checks on staff. They record these accurately on the single central record. An appropriate number of leaders, including governors, have undertaken safer recruitment training.

Additional support

Safeguarding leaders work effectively with a range of agencies to support pupils' safety and welfare. This includes working with the local authority's safeguarding and multi-agency teams, the safer schools police officer and external therapists.

Priorities for further improvement

- Governors should continue to strengthen and embed their knowledge and oversight of the school's safeguarding practices.
- Continue to develop the expertise of the newer members of the safeguarding leadership team.

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

Yours sincerely

David Radomsky
Her Majesty's Inspector