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Tim Gibbs
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Dear Mr Gibbs

No formal designation inspection of Reepham High School and College

Following my visit with Kim Pigram, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 18 January 2022, 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 us and for 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 and the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school (including governance).

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 checked the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements, as well as those linked to pupils' behaviour and attendance. We met with you and other senior leaders, the chief executive officer of the Synergy Multi-Academy Trust, the chair of the local governing body and five groups of pupils, including students in the sixth form and two groups of staff. We considered the effectiveness of the curriculum for pupils' and students' personal, social and health

education (PSHE), including the provision for relationships and sex education. I visited lessons jointly with the headteacher to look at pupils' behaviour and spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone.

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

Safeguarding, and leadership and management arrangements are effective.

Context

Reepham High School and College (RHSC) converted to become an academy and joined the Synergy Multi-Academy Trust in October 2012. There are 1,072 pupils aged 11 to 18 on roll, of these 225 are students in the sixth form provision also known as 'The College'. Most pupils attending the school are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is below the national average. The proportion of pupils in receipt of an education, health and care (EHC) plan is above average. Those pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average.

The most recent Ofsted inspection of the school was in February 2020. The school was judged to remain a good school. Since the previous inspection, new subject leaders have been appointed in English and science. Additional staff have been trained as designated safeguarding leaders. The headteacher has recently taken on the role of executive headteacher of this school and another school in the trust.

Main Findings

Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Leaders, governors and the trust are not complacent. They continue to review, reflect on and take action to improve what they do for vulnerable pupils. Leaders know that safeguarding pupils and students goes beyond their role in securing systems and procedures. This is apparent in all their work related to safeguarding, including in their more recent work to address historic concerns raised in the media. These concerns were linked to how well pupils were being taught to be respectful and to form healthy relationships, both within and beyond school.

Prior to the media concerns raised, work was already underway to further improve pupils' and students' PSHE, with the key theme of 'respect' at the core. In making these changes, leaders have ensured that messages, such as the importance of tolerance and understanding healthy relationships, are well-promoted. These messages are regularly revisited in well-planned lessons and assemblies and through events, such as 'Pronouns' and 'White Ribbon' days.

Pupils and sixth-form students are strongly encouraged to speak out if something does not seem right. A wide range of mechanisms help them to do this, including through the 'red button' system that appears on pupils' screens when they are working on computers.

The majority of pupils feel that reported incidents are taken seriously. The safeguarding team is highly visible and well known across the school.

From Year 7 through to the end of Year 11, pupils are taught how to stay safe in different situations. They know that any form of disrespect and bullying, including through mobile phones and social media, is not tolerated. Pupils and students say they feel safe and are confident that school staff will help them if they are worried.

In the sixth form, students are well focused on their academic studies. The wider sixth form programme includes learning that supports progression to life beyond school. As a result, students are confident in speaking about, for example, managing finances and staying safe in social situations. However, while effective and responsive to needs overall, the PSHE aspect of the sixth-form offer is not as consistently well planned as it is for younger pupils. This means that students do not always get logically sequenced opportunities to build on what they have previously learned in PSHE in an age-appropriate way.

Staff build positive working relationships with pupils and students. Pupils are typically respectful and behave well. They understand leaders' expectations of good behaviour. Consequently, the atmosphere in lessons and around the school is usually calm and purposeful. The few pupils who find it more difficult to self-regulate their behaviour are supported to make changes.

Leaders understand the close links between pupils' attendance, safeguarding and well-being. Consequently, they ensure that effective arrangements are in place to monitor attendance, including for pupils with SEND. Improving the attendance of the few pupils who do not attend school as regularly as they should is an ongoing leadership priority.

The safeguarding team is vigilant and well trained. Staff know the signs to look out for if they suspect a pupil may be at risk from harm. They are encouraged to leave nothing to chance. Safeguarding records are detailed and clear. Trust leaders make additional checks to ensure that systems are secure and well matched to trust-wide expectations.

Governors understand their role and the lines of accountability through the trust. They take their responsibilities for keeping pupils safe very seriously. School leaders provide regular reports on safeguarding matters in meetings, including on pupils' attendance and behaviour. While governors ask relevant questions, they are not always curious enough about the things they are told, for example in checking the precise information held about behaviour in the school. This means that leaders are not consistently challenged to think deeply enough about using all the things they know to make any changes needed for further improvements.

Additional support

Working together with the school's local governing board and the local authority, trust leaders have taken appropriate action to check that safeguarding arrangements are

secure and meet statutory requirements. Effective relationships with agencies such as the local authority, police and health professionals ensure that advice is sought promptly in supporting pupils who might be at risk of harm. Leaders are well informed about local safeguarding concerns through work with multi-agency groups. Safeguarding priorities are focused on prevention through education, as well as intervention when concerns are raised.

Priorities for further improvement

- While the sixth-form offer is responsive to students' needs overall, the PSHE aspect is not as consistently well planned as it is for younger pupils. This means that sixth-form students do not always get logically sequenced opportunities to build on what they have previously learned in an age-appropriate way. Leaders should ensure that the PSHE curriculum in the sixth form is planned to build logically on what students already know to help them prepare for the next steps in education and progression to adult life.
- While the trust and governors ask relevant questions of school leaders in meetings, they do not probe deeply enough into the things they are told about the incidents of poor behaviour. This means that leaders are not routinely challenged to make the best use of all available information to inform any improvements needed. Governors and other leaders should ensure that they are sufficiently curious about the information they review related to pupils' behaviour, so that the level of challenge contributes consistently to ongoing improvements across the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing board, the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of the Synergy Multi-Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Norfolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Christine Dick
Her Majesty's Inspector