

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231  
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7 March 2022

Lesley Davis  
Headteacher  
St Anne's School and Sixth Form College  
St Helen's Drive  
Welton  
Brough  
HU15 1NR

Dear Ms Davis

### **No formal designation inspection of St Anne's School and Sixth Form College**

Following my visit with Annali Crawford, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 8 February 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 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, as well as the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school (including governance) 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 a section 5 inspection immediately.

### **Evidence**

The inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. The inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leads (DSLs), the headteacher and the head of care. They met senior leaders, two groups of pupils and the chair of the governing body, along with three other members of the governing body. They also met with the representative of the local authority who undertook the recent health and safety audit. In addition, meetings were

held with the local authority's lead manager for safeguarding in the school remit and with the authority's assistant director for schools. An inspector made a telephone call to the assistant director with responsibility for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Inspectors reviewed the health and safety audit carried out by the local authority. The most recent safeguarding review carried out by the local authority has not yet been published. Information about accidents and restraints, behaviour logs and attendance information was checked. They also scrutinised the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, which included how safeguarding would be improved.

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

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

#### **Context**

There are currently 162 pupils on roll at the school, which is registered for 160 pupils aged two to 19. During the inspection, there were no two-year-old pupils enrolled at the school. The school plans to move into a new building located at a nearby site in July 2022. There have been 18 new staff appointed since the start of January 2022.

The school is a residential special school catering for pupils with a range of needs, including severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average.

#### **Main findings**

Leaders, staff and governors have dealt with a number of difficulties over the past few months that have been more demanding than those they have usually experienced. In addition, these difficulties have all occurred at the same time, which has added to their impact. Challenges have included turbulence in staffing, due in part to COVID-19. They have also included some pupils joining the setting with significantly higher levels of need than previously encountered. Leaders and staff are dealing with these additional challenges well. For example, they have developed the provision and tightened systems and procedures, including safeguarding practices.

Towards the end of the autumn term 2021, some staff raised concerns about a number of issues, including staffing levels. Senior leaders made a number of changes in response to these concerns. Leaders have worked closely with staff to ensure that staffing levels enable pupils' needs to be met. A pupil rota system is used when staffing levels fall below what leaders consider to be safe. Staffing levels have been affected by COVID-19 isolation, as well as some staff leaving the school. Pupils who are asked not to attend school are required to learn remotely. The rota system ensures that the same pupils are not repeatedly affected when staff are absent. It also means that there are sufficient staff

on site to keep pupils safe. These staff rotas are a short-term solution to the staffing issues. Leaders and governors have prioritised recruiting new staff and have strong plans in place to improve staffing levels. In addition, senior leaders have developed an online system for staff to use to log their concerns about any aspect of the school. Leaders spend a lot of time and effort sifting through complaints from staff and determining what, if any, next steps are appropriate. The system used for logging complaints does not assist leaders well enough in prioritising and analysing complaints from staff.

Leaders and staff know the pupils at the school exceptionally well. This includes having detailed knowledge about any additional safeguarding challenges relating to pupils with SEND. For example, safeguarding leaders have delivered training to parents and carers on how to manage child-on-parent abuse. In addition, within the personal development curriculum, staff emphasise the importance of online safety. This is because staff and leaders have identified that pupils are very keen to use computers for entertainment and for communicating with their friends. Leaders ensure that pupils are taught about the risks posed by social media and gaming websites.

Relationships with parents did become fraught for a while when the school was encountering staffing difficulties late in the autumn term 2021. The partnership between school and home is better now. Leaders and staff are improving the way that they communicate with parents about any changes they introduce. Generally, the school provides impressive support for parents. For instance, a 24-hour helpline for all parents, run by residential staff, was available throughout the national COVID-19 restrictions. A parent who is also a governor told inspectors that this had provided a welcome lifeline during COVID-19 restrictions.

Leaders are not complacent about safeguarding. They gather extensive safeguarding information and use it to make changes to their practice. For example, class teachers analyse staff and pupil accidents to identify patterns and 'hot spots'. They use this analysis to update pupils' individual risk assessments. There are also strong systems in place for recording any safeguarding concerns that staff have about pupils. Staff record all concerns about pupils in detail. The DSL diligently checks all concerns. Where necessary, she make referrals to the local authority's services.

Over the last few months, leaders have developed the provision to ensure that pupils' individual needs are met, including pupils with high levels of need. They have introduced bespoke support packages for these pupils. These packages have included adjusting the classroom environment and increasing staffing ratios. Staff and leaders told inspectors that tailored approaches are having a positive impact. Leaders are keen to introduce specific therapeutic approaches for pupils with higher levels of need, especially pupils who have experienced early childhood trauma. Leaders have well-developed plans in place to do this. They judge that these new approaches will work better if they are introduced after pupils have settled into the school.

Staff receive training in techniques to assist pupils when they become distressed. They have also been trained in safe ways to restrain pupils when they are in crisis. Only staff

with specialist training restrain pupils. Leaders have plans in place to train any supply staff in these methods later this term. Records of restraints are detailed and show that it is used as a last resort to protect pupils and those around them. These records show that over time, the number of times that restraint is used has dropped.

The governing body has expertise in safeguarding. For example, the chair of the governing body previously held a senior role in the police service, and one of the governors has expertise in social work. They have used this to both support and challenge school leaders. Governors listened to staff representatives who raised concerns about levels of staffing. To assist the school in recruiting new staff, governors with expertise in safer recruitment have made themselves more available than usual to interview potential new staff. The safeguarding subcommittee, which is chaired by the chair of the governing body, meets regularly. The subcommittee reviews a wide range of safeguarding information, such as the number of restraints and accidents. Governors often follow up their scrutiny by suggesting additional actions to strengthen safeguarding practices. They also challenge leaders to explain the safeguarding decisions they have made.

### **Additional support**

The assistant director for education has worked very closely with school leaders. She assisted them in responding to concerns raised by staff representatives about staffing levels. The local authority has also supported the school by conducting a detailed health and safety review. This review included some useful recommendations that the school has acted on. As a consequence of this review, leaders have tightened a number of aspects of health and safety. For instance, health and safety guidance is included in induction training.

In addition, the local authority's safeguarding in education team has conducted a wide-reaching safeguarding review, which has included scrutiny of records and referrals as well as meetings with vulnerable pupils. The report from this review has not yet been formally shared with the school. The local authority has provided the school with some spoken feedback prior to the report's publication. This feedback has been broadly positive.

The school has also worked closely with the assistant director for SEND. The local authority's SEND team has assisted the school by providing additional external help for pupils with higher levels of need, such as help from educational psychologists and a learning disability nurse.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- There is a system in place for staff to raise concerns about staffing issues and other school matters. This system is being used well by staff, and has contributed to a more open culture in the school. However, this approach to recording complaints means that leaders spend a lot of time sifting through these in order to decide what needs dealing

with urgency. Leaders should develop the current system for logging such complaints so that it better assists them in identifying and prioritising more serious complaints.

- Leaders have plans in place to introduce specialist therapeutic approaches for pupils who have experienced early childhood trauma. Leaders should ensure that specialist therapies are introduced in a timely manner and that staff receive necessary training. Leaders should monitor the impact of new approaches carefully to ensure that they are having the intended effect.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hubbard  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**