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Harry Anderson
Principal
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Dear Mr Anderson

No formal designation inspection of Muntham House School

Following my visit with Laurie Anderson, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 29 March 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 at the school as concerns had been raised with Ofsted about aspects of leadership and management in 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

We scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We met with you, senior leaders, teachers, support staff and groups of pupils. We also spoke to a representative from the local authority, visited a sample of lessons and visited a whole-school celebration assembly. We considered the findings from a recent staff questionnaire carried out by the school. We reviewed minutes

from governors' meetings and leaders' records on behaviour. We also looked at parents' responses to the confidential Ofsted parental questionnaire.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

Muntham House School is a non-maintained residential special school for boys aged between five and 18. There are 101 pupils on roll, including 20 students in the sixth form. Many pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs and all pupils have an education, health and care plan. The majority of pupils are from a White British background. Approximately half of pupils are eligible for free school meals. A large proportion of pupils are residents in the school's boarding provision. The majority of pupils are placed in the school by West Sussex local authority.

Main findings

Leaders, governors and staff have established a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are well trained. They have a deep understanding of how to support pupils and help them form healthy, positive relationships. Staff are highly vigilant and know what to do to keep pupils safe. Pupils' safety, welfare and well-being are top priorities.

Leaders make sure that staff are clear about how to spot the slightest signs that pupils may be at risk of harm. Staff know how to report their concerns quickly. Senior leaders who form the school's safeguarding team have all undergone designated safeguarding leader training. They ensure that concerns are dealt with promptly and effectively. Leaders maintain detailed records of the concerns raised and the actions subsequently taken. They take a proactive approach to following up all referrals. This includes working with a number of external agencies efficiently. Leaders ensure that pupils receive high-quality help, care and support from staff who know their individual needs extremely well.

Many pupils have had traumatic experiences prior to starting at Muntham House School. Senior staff make sure that pupils who need expert professional support receive it promptly. There are a range of services available to pupils, including speech and language therapy, anger management, occupational therapy and equine therapy. Pupils feel that these services, and particularly the counselling service, are very helpful in promoting their mental health and well-being.

The safeguarding and behaviour policies set out clear procedures and processes for all staff to follow. However, some aspects of these policies are not updated regularly enough to ensure that they reflect changes in the procedures adopted internally. For example, the behaviour policy does not include details about the new positive handling procedures recently introduced. The safeguarding policy includes some aspects that do not apply specifically to the school.

There is a calm, happy and harmonious atmosphere in classrooms and around school. Leaders deliver frequent training that focuses on developing staff's knowledge and expertise about effective strategies to support pupils. Staff adopt a calm and consistent approach. They skilfully provide support when pupils struggle to manage their emotions. However, some staff are not as clear about what to do if they were concerned about the conduct of another member of staff. The safeguarding policy clearly references the whistle-blowing procedures but not all staff are familiar with these.

Leaders ensure that staff manage pupils' behaviour extremely well. Staff have high expectations of how pupils should conduct themselves. Staff are adept at helping pupils to experience success and take the right actions. They sensitively support pupils who exhibit poor behaviour to help them reflect and improve. The behaviour systems are understood very well by staff and pupils. High-quality care from staff and the well-thought-through rewards system help pupils to live up to staff's high standards of behaviour.

Pupils are extremely positive about the care and guidance they receive. They say that there is always an adult whom they can go to if they are worried or concerned about anything. There are strong, trusting relationships between staff and pupils. One pupil said, 'Our school is a great place where all staff are nurturing and caring.' Pupils are confident in the 'ready to learn' processes, whereby those who have difficulty focusing in lessons are given extra help by specialist staff. This means that pupils' learning is seldom disrupted. At breaktimes, staff ensure that pupils have plenty of interesting activities and equipment to occupy them. The school site is secure, clean and very well managed.

Members of the governing body fulfil their statutory safeguarding duties effectively. They check on aspects of safeguarding in the school, such as the single central record, and discuss safeguarding at their meetings. Governors' oversight of the school's policies is not as precise as it could be, however.

Additional support

Local authority representatives have formed positive relationships with the senior leaders. Last year, the local authority conducted a review of safeguarding procedures in the school. This review came to very positive conclusions.

Priorities for further improvement

- Leaders and governors should ensure that all statutory policies are updated to reflect the procedures employed in the school and that any inaccuracies in the school's policies are addressed promptly.
- Leaders should make sure that all staff are aware of how to raise concerns that they may have about other members of staff, and know how to follow the whistle-blowing procedures if needed.

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

Yours sincerely

Harry Ingham
Her Majesty's Inspector