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Nicola Mason
Headteacher
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Dear Dr Mason

No formal designation inspection of School 21

Following my visit with Lauren Thorpe, Anne Hudson, Sahreen Siddiqui and Sean Flood, Ofsted Inspectors, to your school on 29 and 30 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.

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 the headteacher, groups of pupils, groups of staff, the chair of the local governing body and the co-directors of the multi-academy trust. We also met with leaders to discuss safeguarding, behaviour and the provision in place to support pupils' personal development. Additionally, we visited some lessons, observed pupils' behaviour at break and lunchtime, and reviewed responses to the Ofsted pupil survey.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

School 21 is a co-educational school with 1225 pupils currently on roll. It is an all-through provision, starting in the primary phase and continuing through to the sixth form. The provision is organised into four phases on the one site. These phases are the primary, middle and secondary schools and the sixth form. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is lower than the national average. Pupil mobility is typically in line with that found nationally. The school currently has no vacancies for teaching staff. You took up the post of headteacher in September 2021.

Main Findings

Pupils told us that they feel safe in school. They know who to speak to if they have concerns. Many pupils said they had good, professional relationships with staff. They spoke positively about the support and care shown by their coaches, who work with pupils as part of the personal development provision.

Leaders take their responsibility to keep pupils safe seriously. They make sure that all the necessary employment checks are completed prior to new staff starting work. They also have comprehensive policies and procedures in place to safeguard pupils. You ensure that policies are kept up to date and reflect government guidance. These policies underpin a culture in which all staff understand it is their responsibility to safeguard pupils. Leaders make sure that staff receive the training they need to keep pupils safe and identify those who may be at risk of harm. For example, staff have received training on sexual harassment and abuse, and they are aware of the local risks that pupils may face. Staff know how to report concerns to senior staff, and they do this promptly. You and your team take timely and suitable steps to support pupils when issues arise. Additional help and protection are centred on pupils' individual circumstances. This is supplemented with input from external professionals to secure pupils the support that they need.

The curriculum is planned so that pupils learn important information about how to look after their welfare. This includes potential risks to their safety and how these can be avoided. Subject content is delivered through a comprehensive coaching programme, together with well-planned, regular assemblies. Pupils are taught about how to behave respectfully towards others and stand up to discrimination and harassment in all its forms. For example, pupils have learned, in age-appropriate ways, about forming healthy and positive relationships with their peers. This includes learning about consent and what constitutes abusive or inappropriate behaviour. Pupils enjoy their coaching sessions. They

appreciate the time dedicated to raising their awareness of how to stay safe, both online, and in and out of school.

Most pupils said that bullying and the use of derogatory language were rare and not tolerated by staff. If incidents do occur, pupils are confident these will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Leaders ensure that all incidents are recorded and properly dealt with. Nevertheless, in a few cases, pupils, and particularly girls, do not feel fully confident in reporting concerns about inappropriate or sexualised peer-on-peer behaviour. While these pupils felt it would be taken seriously, they said they would like more information on exactly what leaders would do in response. Following a survey on pupils' views and experiences, leaders have already identified this as an aspect of the school's work that needed strengthening. They are working effectively to ensure that all pupils feel ready to speak up if they have concerns about harmful sexual behaviour. You remain resolute in your work to ensure that pupils' views are fully heard and understood. Additional 'listening events' are planned in for early in the summer term. Leaders intend to use pupils' feedback to further refine their approach to dealing with peer-on-peer abuse.

Typically, pupils get along well together and conduct themselves sensibly in school. At breaktimes, for instance, primary-aged pupils like playing with their friends and taking part in the planned activities on offer. Staff are on hand to ensure that pupils play together calmly and safely. You and the senior leadership team identify and follow up appropriately on incidents of poor or inappropriate behaviour.

Sometimes, however, expectations for how behaviour issues should be dealt with and resolved differ across the four school phases. This can be confusing for pupils and staff, and leads to inconsistencies in how behaviour is managed, including during lessons. For example, pupils said that sanctions and consequences can vary depending on the member of staff. This includes sanctions given for off-task behaviour in lessons, as well as breaches in the behaviour policy, such as not wearing the correct uniform. These inconsistencies extend to the way in which behaviour incidents are recorded and analysed across the four school phases. This makes it difficult for leaders, including governors, to build up an accurate picture of pupils' behaviour and attitudes over time.

Leaders have identified these inconsistencies in how behaviour is managed and recorded. Plans are already underway to revamp the behaviour policy and how it is applied in practice. This includes ensuring that procedures for rewards and sanctions are fully understood by pupils and staff, and applied consistently.

Members of the local governing body and trust oversee safeguarding arrangements effectively. They hold leaders to account for their work to secure further improvements, including in pupils' behaviour and attitudes. For example, following your appointment as headteacher, you quickly drew up a plan to bring about greater consistency in the school's work to promote high standards of behaviour. Trustees and governors are fully informed about and supportive of your work.

Additional support

You and those responsible for governance seek advice and guidance from external professionals when needed. For example, a safeguarding audit from the local authority was commissioned to help leaders understand what was working well and what could be strengthened further. The written report has yet to be finalised, but you and your team are acting swiftly on the verbal feedback. For example, arrangements for supervising pupils, both on and off the school site, have already been reviewed and refined in light of the audit's recommendations.

Priorities for further improvement

- Leaders should continue their work to identify and reduce any barriers pupils may face in reporting concerns. They should ensure that pupils are informed appropriately about the procedures and systems for responding to these concerns.
- Plans are in place to bring about greater consistency in how behaviour incidents are managed and recorded, and in turn ensure that leaders have a full picture of pupils' behaviour over time. Leaders should build on this work. They should make sure that all staff and pupils are fully confident and clear about how high standards of behaviour will be promoted across the four school phases.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of the Big Education multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Newham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector