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Adam Whitehead
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Dear Mr Whitehead

No formal designation inspection of Steining Grammar School

Following my visit with Lucy English, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 22 June 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 the behaviour and welfare of pupils.

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, senior leaders, groups of pupils and staff as well as representatives of the local governing body and board of trustees. We met with the chief executive officer of the trust. We scrutinised documents relating to behaviour, including policies and the school's logs of behavioural incidents, including bullying. We made brief visits to lessons and spoke to pupils at social times. We

visited and spoke with pupils on each of the school's three campuses. We looked at a selection of other documentation, including minutes of governing body meetings and documents from the local authority relevant to the focus of this inspection.

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

Safeguarding is effective

Context

There are 2264 pupils on roll at this school, including 397 in the sixth form. The school operates across three sites. Some pupils board at the school on a separate site and this provision did not form part of this inspection. The school joined a multi-academy trust in December 2020. A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at an unregistered alternative provider. Some pupils complete courses at local colleges as part of their curriculum. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average.

Main Findings

Leaders make sure that safeguarding is a priority in the school. They have put in place strong policies and procedures to help keep children safe. All staff are trained well so that they know how to identify concerns. They take their role in safeguarding seriously and pass on any relevant information quickly using the school's systems. Leaders respond effectively to any issues that are raised. They provide support in school, communicate with parents and refer to external agencies whenever needed. Allegations against adults are handled appropriately and the school consults with the local authority when required. Governors have a good understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities and discuss these regularly in their meetings. They work closely with leaders and trustees to assure themselves that the school's arrangements for safeguarding are robust.

Pupils feel safe in school because there are lots of staff that they can talk to if they have a problem. Behaviour in lessons is focused and orderly. However, pupils say that a few areas of the school can be intimidating at social times and between lessons because they are crowded and sometimes behaviour can be boisterous. They recognise the improvements that leaders are making, for example by increasing adult supervision in these areas.

Pupils say that unkindness and bullying sometimes happen, which occasionally includes the use of discriminatory language. They say that some staff are inconsistent in dealing with this but they are confident that leaders tackle these incidents swiftly if they are reported formally. Leaders have reinforced their expectations of behaviour and pupils recognise that this has helped to ensure that everybody knows what is acceptable in school. Leaders have also introduced new systems to make it easier for pupils to report their concerns, and these are well used and understood by pupils.

Leaders have rightly identified a need to develop the current programme for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. Some pupils say that these lessons can be repetitive and variable in their impact. Leaders are in the process of developing new plans which take into account more fully the school's local context. Most pupils are knowledgeable about the topics which have been a significant focus in the current PSHE curriculum. This includes healthy relationships, drugs and alcohol. During the inspection, it was found that the predecessor school might not have consulted with parents regarding the new relationships and sex education policy. When this was found, current leaders immediately acted to address this.

Additional support

The trust and its chief executive officer have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development. Trustees work closely with the school's governors on shaping the school's vision and developing effective systems. Leaders consult with the local authority where appropriate, particularly in relation to safeguarding.

Priorities for further improvement

- Some members of staff are inconsistent in reinforcing high expectations of behaviour. Leaders should continue with their plans to provide additional training and support in this area and then monitor the impact of this to check it brings greater consistency and continues to improve behaviour in all areas of the school.
- Leaders have rightly identified that the planning and delivery of the PSHE curriculum needs to be developed. They are in the process of reviewing this to make sure that the programme is relevant and focuses on the topics important to pupils in the school's particular context. They should continue with this work so that the delivery of PSHE is consistently high quality and prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Chichester, 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

Chris Ellison
Her Majesty's Inspector