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Dan Whieldon
Principal
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Dear Mr Whieldon

Urgent inspection of Leeds West Academy

Following my visit to your school on 21 and 22 September 2022 with Matthew Vellensworth, His Majesty's Inspector, and Nicola Crum, Carl Sugden and Gordon Watts, Ofsted Inspectors, I write on behalf of His 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 urgent inspections. The inspection was carried out because His Majesty's Chief Inspector wished to determine the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the school as concerns had been raised with Ofsted about behaviour and attitudes of pupils.

We do not give graded judgements on urgent 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 graded inspection, which will be carried out under section 5 of the Act and be brought forward. If we have serious concerns, we will deem the urgent inspection as a graded inspection immediately.

Evidence

We scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We met with the principal and the deputy chief executive officer. Meetings were held remotely with the chair of the local advisory board and the chair of the board of trustees. We also met with groups of pupils, members of staff, the

designated safeguarding lead and the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator (SENDCo). We observed pupils' behaviour and conduct at different times during the school day. We reviewed the responses to Ofsted's parent survey, minutes from local advisory board meetings, headteacher reports and local authority safeguarding audits of the school's work.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Main findings

'Be ready, be respectful and be safe' are the school rules. The warm welcome offered by pupils reflects these values.

Leaders make sure that staff receive continual training on a variety of safeguarding-related themes. Weekly meetings focus on a range of safeguarding topics and how staff may deal with them effectively. As a result, staff understand well the procedure for reporting any safeguarding concerns they have relating to pupils. Leaders respond to concerns raised and keep staff informed of actions taken.

Staff set a positive tone. They meet and talk to pupils at the gate in the morning. Pupils are welcomed on entrance to every classroom. Pupils and staff know that the 'step out' greeting is part of the daily routine of the school. This helps to secure a punctual start to learning and lessons.

Leaders encourage pupils to talk to each other in a respectful manner. During the inspection, we saw pupils engaged in polite and constructive conversations at breakfast and lunchtime. Every pupil in the school is welcome to a free breakfast every day. The number of pupils arriving at school early, eating together and then moving off to registration has increased. Pupils arrive in a positive and controlled manner to their first lesson.

Leaders and staff have high expectations of behaviour. Pupils are aware of what is appropriate and unacceptable behaviour. As a result, disruption in class has reduced.

Classrooms are purposeful places to learn. Most pupils behave responsibly and with respect for others. They are aware of teachers' expectations. As a result, there is typically a focused attitude in the classroom. When pupils stray off task, teachers swiftly refocus pupils' attention, helping them to understand what they could do better next time.

Pupils report that bullying and prejudice are infrequent. Records support this. Leaders act swiftly to explore and understand any instances of bullying. They do not tolerate poor behaviour. Leaders encourage pupils to review and think about their actions so that pupils can make up following any disagreements with their friends.

There has been a recent decline in the number of suspensions. When used, leaders consider the individual needs of the pupils prior to suspension and hold a reintegration meeting before pupils return to school. There has been a reduction in the number of pupils who are suspended more than once. Staff support pupils effectively to address the underlying issues that have resulted in a suspension.

Leaders use alternative education provision appropriately to support some pupils' behavioural needs. This provision is having a positive effect on the small number of pupils educated elsewhere. Leaders make regular safeguarding checks to ensure pupils are safe.

Leaders monitor pupils' attendance at school carefully. When pupils are not in school the pastoral team coordinates support and provides subject work to help pupils stay in touch with their learning. There is a strong focus on helping pupils who are persistently absent from school to improve their attendance. Leaders have been successful in helping some pupils to attend more often but there is more to do.

Staff receive regular pupil information and training from the SENDCo. Staff are competent in identifying pupils who require additional assistance with their learning. When required, staff provide pupils with support in small groups. Leaders have high expectations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) both in terms of their achievement and behaviour. Leaders from the SEND team are on hand to offer help to pupils with their behaviour. This has helped to reduce the number of times pupils with SEND are removed from class for behavioural issues.

Pupils engage well with citizenship and personal development activities. This helps them to understand, and explore in detail, themes relating to tolerance, respect and their own safety.

Governors understand their safeguarding responsibilities well. They take their duty to keep pupils safe seriously. Leaders report all safeguarding concerns to governors. The questions that governors pose to leaders are searching and closely linked to each safeguarding update. For instance, governors check the accuracy of the information presented by leaders during their regular school visits. Leaders are challenged and supported effectively by governors. This means that self-evaluation and self-reflection are prominent features of leaders' work. This leads to a cycle of continuous improvement.

Additional support

Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are appropriate, putting the needs of pupils first. Leaders have established links with the police, health professionals, the local authority and a variety of different agencies which help to ensure that safeguarding advice is sought as soon as possible. Through their involvement in multi-agency organisations, leaders are well informed about regional safeguarding issues.

Priorities for further improvement

- Leaders have created various approaches to interact with families and motivate pupils to attend school more often. While there have been improvements in pupils' attendance of late, leaders acknowledge that further improvements can be made. Leaders are diligent in following up on repeated absences and in collaborating with families. Leaders should keep working with families and pupils who do not attend as often as they should to further reduce persistent absence across the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Jones
His Majesty's Inspector