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Gary Regan
Executive Principal
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Dear Mr Regan

Urgent inspection of Chiltern Way Academy

Following my visit with Michelle Lower, His Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 11 July 2023, 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.

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 and met with the executive principal, senior leaders, executive leaders, including the chief executive officer, staff and pupils. I had a separate telephone conversation with the nominated governor for safeguarding.

We also considered a range of other evidence, including leaders' assessment of safeguarding arrangements and records of safeguarding incidents, including actions taken by leaders. We reviewed governors' notes of visits and policies relating to safeguarding and attendance. We conducted a scrutiny of records focused on pupils' attendance and

behaviour. This inspection took place at the Wendover campus and the inspection team met with designated safeguarding leads from Prestwood and Bierton Hill campuses on site.

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

Safeguarding is effective

Context

There are 244 pupils on the school roll. The school operates across three campuses. The trust now has a second school within the trust in Wokingham. The schools across the trust provide specialist provision for pupils with autism and social, emotional and mental health needs. The school uses one registered alternative provider. All pupils at the school have an education, health and care plan.

Main Findings

Leaders have rightly ensured that safeguarding is a key priority in the school. They have used their expert knowledge to train staff and ensure that a strong culture of safeguarding is embedded across the school. Staff are knowledgeable about how to identify signs of risk, particularly in relation to contextual issues such as county lines and child sexual exploitation. Leaders have implemented clear policies for reporting concerns. These are effective and well understood by all staff. Trust leaders play a key role in checking and ensuring that safeguarding procedures are robust. Governors know their responsibilities for safeguarding well. They spend time in school and work closely with leaders so that they know what is working well and what needs to be improved. However, although governors ask probing questions about pupils' attendance, they do not explore more fully the trends in persistent absence.

Leaders ensure that concerns are recorded swiftly and appropriately. They use their detailed records to monitor pupils that they are concerned about carefully. Leaders take action to seek support and advice from external agencies swiftly. Leaders are persistent in ensuring that vulnerable pupils receive the specific help that they and their families need. On the rare occasion that this has not happened, leaders have reflected and improved their practice immediately.

Leaders perform important checks so that they are assured that all adults are safe to work in the school. The school commissions alternative provision appropriately, confirming that safeguarding systems are effective before pupils begin their placement.

Leaders have implemented systems to ensure that the needs of vulnerable pupils who are new to the school are well understood. However, although extremely rare, they have not always shown enough professional curiosity about pupils' previous education and welfare. In response, leaders have acted decisively to make the necessary improvements to their policies. They are more persistent in seeking information from external agencies when a pupil joins the school following a period of absence from a school setting.

Leaders have identified that there has been a weakness in the timeliness with which they were conducting home visits. They have acted quickly to strengthen their systems, including increasing staff capacity, so that pupils are visited more regularly by a representative from the school. They check that other agencies carry out their role in ensuring that pupils are safe when they are persistently absent and are becoming more tenacious in doing this.

To increase individual pupils' attendance, leaders appropriately seek additional help. This includes sourcing mental health support and guidance for pupils and their families. Pupils' attendance and engagement with education frequently improve following this intervention.

Pupils trust adults to help them should they need it. They know that staff will act quickly if there are incidents of dysregulated behaviour. As a result, pupils feel safe and well cared for in school. They report that the school is a happy place for them to learn.

Additional support

The trust and the chief executive officer have strong oversight of the school's strengths and weaknesses, including its safeguarding systems. Executive safeguarding leaders ensure that designated safeguarding leads at each campus are well supported to reflect on and improve practice so that they carry out their roles with expertise. Leaders consult with the local authority regularly when they are concerned about pupils.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that plans to increase the frequency and effectiveness of home visits for persistently absent pupils are realised through high-quality staff training and embedding newly implemented home visit procedures.
- Sharpen governors' questioning to focus on persistent absence trends in addition to overall attendance, including for the most vulnerable groups.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of the Chiltern Way multi-academy trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Buckinghamshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Zoë Harris
His Majesty's Inspector