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Rhoda McPherson
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Dear Mrs McPherson

Urgent inspection of Queen Elizabeth School

Following my visit with Jenny Brassington and James Shapland, Ofsted Inspectors, and Tracy Fielding, Senior His Majesty's Inspector, to the school on 21 November, 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 the 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 Ofsted was concerned about aspects of the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school (including governance), and personal development of pupils 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. We met with the principal, other leaders, including the designated safeguarding lead, groups of pupils and the chair and vice-chair of the board

of governors, and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.

We also reviewed the recent local authority and external audits of safeguarding practices, and paperwork relating to pupils accessing alternative provision and how they are checked on and supported.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Main findings

Throughout the visit, it was clear that pupils' safety and welfare are at the forefront of your thinking. All adults have accessed training which means they are confidently able to identify the signs that a pupil may need help. This includes a clear awareness, and depth of understanding, of the local risks that pupils face in their communities. Staff understand how to report these concerns, which they do quickly, and know what to do if they are worried about a pupil.

To inform pupils about keeping safe, you have further developed your personal, social and health education provision. This programme ensures that all pupils are well informed about current topics within the contexts in which they live. This well-planned programme helps pupils spot, and work to mitigate and avoid, risks. They understand how to keep themselves safe online and offline.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are also well supported. There are specific plans in place to develop their independence and knowledge according to their particular needs. Consequently, this means pupils with SEND are less vulnerable to risk when they leave school.

Pupils learn about extremist behaviour in the religious education programme. They speak knowledgeably about the dangers of extremism. While pupils do not always see it as a safety issue, the curriculum content is increasingly supporting pupils to deepen this understanding. This is increasing pupils' awareness and contributes towards them staying alert to the risks and, subsequently, is effective in safeguarding them from extremist influences.

Case files contain highly detailed information. Previously, it was difficult for staff to track individual cases. It was not always easy to determine exactly if or when to escalate cases. You have been proactive in addressing this. You have introduced clearly defined categories within the logs. Additionally, you have secured connections with other school records, such as attendance and behaviour, to ensure there is a 'big picture' of pupils that informs your actions. Cases are now easy to track. Any member of the team can pick up a record, understand the issues and get support for pupils when they most need it. The protocols for adults not directly employed by the school reporting concerns are now

equally as robust. This means that you are able to respond to all concerns in a timely and appropriate way.

Pupils know that the school is a safe place for them to be. They value the feeling that staff have their welfare and interests at heart. Pupils know that there is always someone there to help them if they need it, no matter how big or small their worry. They feel safe, and are.

You make effective use of alternative provision to help pupils who struggle in school to remain engaged in education. There is always a clear rationale for alternative provision. Provision is well planned. There is a determination to return pupils to full-time education in school as soon as possible. You only use a small number of approved providers. You routinely maintain contact with pupils on placements. Your staff make regular visits, and have conversations with pupils, providers and parents. This means you are able to maintain a secure oversight of quality and pupils' safety.

The relationship between the local authority and the school is not always positive and trusting. While this does not place pupils at risk, it can potentially impede the effectiveness of accessing the most appropriate support as quickly as you would like.

Additional support

You have used your contacts with other schools and trusts to help maintain and improve the quality of your provision. For example, the training you have brought in from outside the local authority has been effective in supporting staff to understand how to keep pupils safe.

You understand the importance of maintaining a strong relationship with the local authority. Alongside your governors, you have begun to work with local authority officers to establish positive working relationships that support your work in safeguarding pupils.

Priorities for further improvement

- The relationship between the school and the local authority is, at times, strained. While this does not place pupils at risk of harm, it means that the support vulnerable pupils and their families receive can be impacted on. The school should ensure that it continues its work with the local authority to rebuild trust and further strengthen the partnership.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of governors, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Luton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Dave Gibson
His Majesty's Inspector