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Julian Waterfield
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Dear Mr Waterfield

Urgent inspection of St Anne's Catholic School

Following my visit with Sarah McGinnis, His Majesty's Inspector, to the school on 5 and 6 June 2024, 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 concerns had been raised with Ofsted.

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 acting headteacher, executive headteacher, groups of pupils, groups of staff, the chair of the board of trustees, and a representative of the local authority.

Inspectors talked to pupils informally at various times of the school day. We examined school policies and information on the school's website. In addition, we scrutinised trustees' minutes, findings from local authority safeguarding audits, attendance records

and records of concerns about adults. Inspectors considered the responses from parents to Ofsted Parent View and responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

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

Arrangements for safeguarding are effective

Main findings

In recent months, leaders, including those responsible for governance, have taken action to strengthen various aspects of safeguarding. Specifically, leaders have improved record-keeping, enhanced staff expertise in identifying and responding to pupils who may need help and made changes to the organisation of staff who are responsible safeguarding.

Staff receive thorough training on a wide range of safeguarding topics. This helps them to identify signs of abuse and understand when it is necessary to report a concern. They are attentive to signs that a pupil may need help. They promptly share any concerns with the school's safeguarding team. Leaders have established systems for staff to document their concerns about pupils who may be at risk. More recently, leaders have insisted that staff record any concerns about pupils formally. This means leaders now have a comprehensive overview of pupils' individual circumstances and needs. Furthermore, staff are clear on how to report any worries they have about a member of staff's behaviour.

The acting headteacher is the main designated safeguarding lead. He works with a team of well-trained safeguarding staff, and they monitor all reports of concern diligently. This team investigates concerns well and refers to other agencies as needed. In addition, the members of the safeguarding team use information about concerns to identify broader patterns and trends that may exist across the school. For example, they have recently expanded the range of support available to pupils. As part of this work, leaders have made sure that pupils can more easily access counselling services to support their well-being. This support is highly valued by the pupils.

The recruitment of staff follows appropriate safer recruitment practice. Several leaders and governors have completed safer recruitment training. At least one of these leaders is always present on interview panels. Leaders ensure that the correct pre-employment checks are made before staff take up post. They maintain an accurate record of these checks.

School leaders understand the potential risks that pupils face. They educate pupils about these risks and provide them with the necessary information to help them stay safe. For example, pupils learn about how to keep safe while using the internet. The school's personal, social, health and economic education curriculum is well designed. It ensures that pupils and students in the sixth form learn age-appropriate content about what constitutes positive and healthy relationships. Additionally, pupils are taught where and

how to access support, including through an anonymous referral system on the school's website, if they need it.

The atmosphere around school at breaktime and lunchtimes is calm and orderly. At breaktime, hundreds of pupils, in smaller groups on the playground, chat calmly and pleasantly. They are well supervised by staff, who are vigilant but relaxed, talking to pupils about various aspects of school life while checking that everyone is safe.

Pupils and students in the sixth form report that they feel safe in school. Most pupils feel confident to talk to adults in school about any worries they may have. However, some pupils, particularly in some younger year groups, do not feel they are able to report their concerns or that their concerns will be taken seriously. Leaders, including trustees, acknowledge that there is further work to do to ensure all pupils feel comfortable sharing any worries they have with adults in school.

Leaders give serious attention to ensuring pupils and parents understand the importance of regular attendance. There is a good understanding of the links between safeguarding and attendance. Leaders systematically check on pupils' attendance and are professionally curious about why pupils may not be in school. They take timely action to ensure the reasons for the absence are known and that they follow up absences well. For the small number of pupils who attend some of their education off site thorough checks are made to ensure they are safe.

Trustees have the necessary skills to fulfil their roles. They ensure that the school is meeting statutory safeguarding duties. For instance, the school's safeguarding policy takes into account the latest guidance provided by the Department for Education. Last year, trustees commissioned the local authority to undertake a review of the school's safeguarding work. As a result of the findings of this audit, trustees have made several positive changes to strengthen aspects of safeguarding. These changes have included trustees ensuring that they receive a wider range of first-hand information about how well the school is safeguarding and protecting pupils. This means that trustees have an increasingly accurate view of what is working well and where things could be improved further.

Additional support

School leaders have benefited from the extensive range of support they have received from the local authority. This work has included undertaking a review of the school's safeguarding practice.

Priorities for further improvement

- Some pupils in the school do not feel confident in raising any concerns or worries they have with school staff. As a result, there is potential that a pupil may not share a problem they have. The school should take further action to gather a comprehensive

view of what is causing some pupils to feel this way and take the necessary actions to ensure that all pupils feel confident in raising any concerns or worries they may have.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the director of education for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Southampton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Stevens
His Majesty's Inspector