

Serco Inspections
Colmore Plaza
20 Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T: 0121 679 9154
Direct E: aidan.dunne@serco.com

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Miss Sheralee Webb
Northgate School Arts College
Queen's Park Parade
Kingsthorpe
Northampton
NN2 6LR

Dear Miss Webb

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Northgate School Arts College

Following my visit with Pete Sewell, Her Majesty's Inspector to your academy on 2 December 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out in response to a complaint made to Ofsted which raised serious concerns. The complaint was deemed to be a qualifying complaint and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that an inspection of the academy should take place to follow up the wider issues that were raised. In particular, Inspectors sought to establish whether:

- safeguarding arrangements are adequate, including the ability of staff to respond appropriately to any concerns about the safety and well-being of students
- school leaders and the governing body understand and fulfil their statutory responsibilities for safeguarding
- students feel safe at the academy
- the curriculum helps students to stay safe, for example through E Safety and sex and relationships education
- the academy adapts these aspects of the curriculum effectively to take account of the different needs of students.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements and met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher and with the Chair of the Governing Body. Visits were made to classrooms on the main site and at The Beehive. Break time and lunchtime

arrangements were observed. Inspectors spoke informally to students and to staff and to a small number of parents at the end of the school day. The 31 responses to the online survey Parent View were considered. Minutes from meetings of the governing body were reviewed and information about attendance and exclusions was considered.

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

The academy's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

Context

There are 182 students at this secondary special academy for 11-19 year olds. All students have a statement of special educational needs. Just over a third of students have autistic spectrum disorders and the remaining students have moderate or severe learning difficulties. The proportion of students who are disadvantaged is slightly above the average nationally. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below average for secondary schools nationally.

The school became an academy in 2011. The academy is located on two sites. Younger students spend the majority of their time at the main site while post-16 provision is located at The Beehive.

Safeguarding arrangements

Students' well-being and safety are rightly given high priority by academy leaders, governors and staff. Recruitment procedures ensure that any applicants for jobs at Northgate are clear about the academy's commitment to keeping students safe and leaders ensure that all the appropriate checks are made on the suitability of staff prior to appointment. Leaders have a good understanding of the most recent legislation and guidance on keeping students safe. Safeguarding policies and procedures have been updated to reflect this guidance. A clear and comprehensive code of conduct has been written and shared with all staff to ensure that they understand their responsibilities. Leaders have ensured that training on safeguarding policy and procedures is part of the academy's induction package for all new staff. Regular training sessions and updates in staff meetings help to ensure that levels of staff awareness remain high. The teachers and teaching assistants who spoke with inspectors have a secure understanding of possible signs of abuse and know what they should do if a student makes a disclosure.

The academy deals appropriately with any safeguarding issues that do arise. Clear records are kept of any incidents or concerns raised and when appropriate, leaders seek the advice of other professionals. Leaders are clear about when they should refer a case to the local authority including the local authority designated officer. Cases examined and discussed during the inspection indicated that suitable action had been taken and appropriate referrals made following incidents or concerns. Case files are stored securely and include information about any meetings attended and recommendations made. However, it is sometimes difficult to quickly determine the chronology of events and actions taken following an incident or disclosure, or to identify which professionals are currently supporting a student because no overview or chronological record is kept.

Leaders and governors have recognised the importance of good attendance and ensure that absences are followed up promptly and robustly. In line with national guidance, the headteacher does not agree to students taking holidays in term time. Good attendance is promoted and celebrated with students. As a result of these actions attendance is improving and is now close to the average for all secondary schools nationally. However, the number of students who are persistently absent is above average. The academy's information shows that this is mainly due to the absence of a small number of students who have significant health and medical needs.

Governors are aware that safeguarding policies and procedures have been updated by academy leaders to reflect current requirements. Minutes from meetings of the governing body show that governors ask leaders questions for example, to ensure that leaders responsible for safeguarding have received the appropriate training. Although governors place a high priority on keeping students safe they are too reliant on academy leaders to provide them with information and do not check for themselves that the academy meets requirements. Governors recognise their need for further training and have organised for a number of governors to attend a training event focused on governors' safeguarding responsibilities.

Day-to-day procedures to keep students safe were observed to be appropriate. For example, any visitors to the academy have to be admitted by a member of staff and are required to sign in and wear a badge. Students were well supervised at lunch and break times when they were outside or when they were eating their lunch. Levels of supervision around the academy building in corridors and at entrances and exits were good. Students said that these good levels of supervision were typical.

During the inspection students behaved well and were polite and helpful to staff and to one another. Many students were very keen to talk to inspectors and said that they enjoy school and feel safe. Students said that behaviour is usually good and that there are always adults around to provide help if they are worried or upset. One student explained that staff are 'always going on about keeping safe and behaving safely so that no-one gets hurt'. Almost all of the parents who responded to the online survey Parent View, or who spoke to inspectors, were very positive about the

academy. They said that their children felt safe and were well looked after. They were confident that the academy is well led and managed and the very large majority would recommend the academy.

The academy's curriculum has a strong focus on personal, social and health education. It includes units of work on personal care and hygiene, drug and alcohol awareness and understanding relationships. Older students are taught about consent and about protective behaviours. These units help students to recognise situations where they feel worried or unsafe, such as feeling stressed, bullied or threatened and explore practical ways to help them keep safe and get help. Some lessons are planned and delivered to classes of students; others are tailored to meet the needs of different groups or individuals. Staff also respond to particular requests from parents and will help students and parents deal with particular aspects of sex and relationships education. The academy's written policy on sex and relationships education is out of date and does not provide an overview of the curriculum in this area or reflect the good work that is going on within the academy. At The Beehive, records are kept of which older students have attended each session but these are not used well enough to identify any students who may have been absent and ensure that they have opportunities to cover what they have missed. It was not clear which units have been covered by younger students.

The academy has clear and comprehensive policies on internet safety. Staff are required to follow the academy's social networking policy and acceptable internet use policy. Students have focused lessons about keeping safe when using the internet or mobile phones for example, on internet safety day. Students say they are also given regular reminders in other lessons about staying safe when using computers. A group of students explained to an inspector that you should never talk on the internet to anyone you don't know or tell them your name. One student gave a clear explanation of the need to have appropriate privacy settings when using social networking.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that case files created following a safeguarding incident, or a disclosure from a student, have an overview or chronological account of the key actions taken and the professionals involved.
- Ensure that governors check for themselves that the academy meets the requirements set out in the guidance from the Department for Education, '*Keeping children safe in education*'.
- Update the sex and relationships policy so that it reflects current practice and provides an overview of what is taught and ensure that records are kept so that catch-up sessions can be planned for any students who were absent .

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Northampton, the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Morag Kophamel
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc Chair of the Governing Body (or equivalent)