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15 December 2014

Mrs Melanie Hewitt
Head of Academy
Mersey Primary Academy
Derwent Street
Hull
HU8 8TX

Dear Mrs Hewitt

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Mersey Primary Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 11 and 12 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 two complaints made to Ofsted which raised serious concerns. The complaints were deemed to be qualifying complaints and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that an inspection of the academy should take place to follow up the issues that were raised.

The inspector sought to establish whether:

- safeguarding procedures are adequate, including the response to pupils presenting challenging behaviour
- suitable adjustments are made to behaviour management procedures according to pupils' needs and disabilities
- staff are suitably trained and able to seek advice and support when required
- academy leaders and the education advisory board are effective in monitoring and evaluating policy and practice for behaviour management and safeguarding within the academy.

Evidence

The inspector scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements and met with the Executive Principal, head of academy, the Chair of the Education Advisory Board, a representative of the academy sponsor, teachers and pupils. Visits were made to all

classes with the head of academy. There were insufficient responses submitted to the online questionnaire for parents (Parent View) but consideration was given to the outcomes of the most recent academy parental survey.

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

The academy's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

Context

- The academy is a small sized school, catering for pupils aged 3 – 11. There are currently 197 pupils on roll, including 27 part time Nursery pupils.
- The academy became a sponsored academy in October 2013 and is part of the School Partnership Trust Academies (SPTA).
- The Executive Principal was appointed on 1 January 2013 and the head of academy in April 2014. The Education Advisory Board federated with another SPTA academy advisory board in September 2014.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional government money) is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average.
- There are currently no looked after children in the academy.

The Executive Principal and the head of academy are taking effective action in ensuring that safeguarding and child protection arrangements keep pupils safe. A child protection policy is in place which takes account of current statutory guidance for schools and makes reference to locally agreed procedures put in place by the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Every member of the academy staff possesses a copy and it is accessible to parents. The document is fully operational and reviewed annually. The policy makes reference to other safeguarding policies including, anti-bullying, whistle blowing, e-safety and behaviour.

The head of academy is the designated safeguarding lead and this includes a responsibility for the achievement of looked after children. This is referred to in her job description. She has undertaken appropriate training and has been given sufficient time and resources which enable her to fulfil the role effectively. Senior leaders have made sure that all staff including teachers, teaching assistants and administrators have received safeguarding training, including e-safety. As a result, they demonstrate a good understanding of safeguarding procedures and, as such, are well placed to look after and promote the welfare of pupils.

Staff show a high level of care and this is acknowledged by pupils. Pupils informed the inspector: 'we feel safe and enjoy coming to school because the teachers look after us'. Senior leaders have established systems to help teachers identify and address welfare concerns without delay. Minor concerns are recorded and referred to the member of staff responsible for pupils' emotional well-being. A separate system is in place for noting significant concerns and disclosures. Record keeping is thorough. The head of academy ensures that child protection records are accurate, up to date and kept in a secure location. The academy has established effective links

with a range of external agencies and this ensures that pupils receive the most appropriate level of support.

The Education Advisory Board (EAB), which is responsible for governance, has taken steps to ensure that its members comply with their duties under legislation. Members make sure that the policies, procedures and training in the academy are effective and comply with the law. The EAB ratifies policies, receives information about training and discusses issues within the community that may well have a bearing on pupils' welfare. The head of academy meets with the Chair of the EAB regularly to explain how the curriculum raises pupils' awareness of safeguarding issues and how pupils are taught to look after themselves. This includes anti-bullying week, physical, social and health provision and sex and relationship education. The Chair of the EAB is the designated person to liaise with the local authority or partner agencies on issues of child protection in the event of allegations of abuse made against academy leaders. There are systems in place to check the suitability of staff. A recruitment and selection policy is in place and at least one member of the EAB has received safer recruitment training.

The most recent parental questionnaire undertaken by the academy in July 2014 suggests that the overwhelming majority of parents believe that the behaviour of pupils is good and that it is well managed. The behaviour policy sets out a single approach to behaviour management across the academy. Visits to lessons during the inspection together with discussions with pupils and teachers confirmed that all adults are consistent in their adherence to this approach.

Pupils show positive attitudes to learning. They respond confidently to teachers' questions and directions, work well together and demonstrate an enthusiasm for their work. It is no surprise, therefore, that the proportion of pupils achieving age-related expectations in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6 have risen significantly over the past two years. Data held by the academy suggest that this trend is expected to continue. Pupils say that bullying is rare. Logs of inappropriate behaviour were scrutinised during the inspection and this supported their perception. They are up to date and include references to any action taken by senior leaders in order to address the behaviour.

Pupils play well together and are supervised at all times. The academy takes its responsibility to raise pupils' awareness of bullying seriously. An anti-bullying week has taken place in the autumn term and issues are addressed through the curriculum and in assemblies. Pupils confirmed this and were able to define what constitutes bullying and explain the range of associated activities including physical, verbal and emotional abuse.

Arrangements are in place for parents and carers to discuss any concerns that they may have regarding pupils' welfare, including issues relating to behaviour. This involves a series of five stages that commences with the class teacher and ends with the Executive Principal. For a small academy this number of steps is unnecessary as it can give an impression that parental concerns are not taken seriously by senior leaders. Furthermore, it would help if the academy made clear to parents the

difference in roles of the head of academy and the Executive Principal who is not always available to parents because of the demands of overseeing three academies.

External support

The support given to the academy by the trust advisory team is good. This has included advice in relation to safeguarding issues and behaviour management. Academy leaders have also taken advantage of support available from the local authority which led to an audit of child protection and safeguarding procedures at the beginning of the autumn term 2014. These actions have contributed to the academy's work in keeping children safe.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that parents and carers have quicker access to senior leaders to discuss any concerns they may have in relation to pupils' welfare including behaviour.

I am copying this letter to the Hull Director of Children's Services, to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Education Advisory Board and 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

Christopher Keeler
Her Majesty's Inspector