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12 October 2015

Ms Grainne McLaughlin  
Head of School  
The Gateway Academy  
Narshfoot Road  
Grays  
RM16 4LU

Dear Ms McLaughlin

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of The Gateway Academy**

Following my visit with Joanna Jones, Ofsted Inspector, to your academy on 22 September 2015, 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 because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the academy.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. Meetings were held with you, the academy leadership team, members of the governing body, academy staff and representatives of agencies providing additional support for pupils. Inspectors also met with groups of pupils, in meetings and informally, to discuss how the academy helps them to keep safe from harm. In addition, inspectors observed an assembly and tutor time, and focused on health and safety in lessons across a range of subjects and year groups. Additional documentation was scrutinised, including reports to governors, the academy's self-evaluation and improvement plan and information about pupils' attendance, behaviour and welfare. There were too few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, for these to be considered. However, inspectors analysed results of the academy's surveys of parents and met with parents and carers.

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

**The academy's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.**

## **Context**

The Gateway Academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school, with 982 pupils on roll. The academy is part of The Gateway Learning Community partnership of schools sponsored by the Ormiston Trust. About half of the pupils come from disadvantaged backgrounds and are therefore eligible for support through additional government funding, known as the pupil premium. This proportion is much larger than average, as is the proportion of pupils in the care of the local authority. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is below the national average. At around a fifth, the proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above the national average. A below-average proportion of pupils join or leave the academy part way through their secondary education. The head of school started at the academy in July 2015. Staffing is stable. Staff are recruited from a very wide area because of difficulties in recruiting suitable teaching staff.

## **Main findings**

Academy leaders have implemented effective systems to ensure that pupils keep safe from harm. Rigorous checks on policies and procedures, specifically focused on safeguarding, ensure that they are up to date and match national guidance. Swift and decisive action is taken to improve aspects of the academy where improvement is required. For example, the academy's analysis of behaviour records showed a significant decline in recorded incidents related to bullying and racism but it raised concerns about pupils' awareness of e-safety, particularly out of school. As a consequence, academy leaders worked with their link police officer and revised the way pupils learn about e-safety. A series of powerful assemblies about the risks and dangers of using electronic devices, including computers and mobile phones, have made a deep impression on pupils. In lessons and in discussions, pupils show a secure understanding of e-safety. They are clear about the rationale for the academy's new policy about mobile phones, which is having a positive impact on their good attitudes to learning and life.

Issues of local concern also guide the academy's work well. For example, assembly topics and the daily form period known as personal academic development (PAD) time are carefully constructed to cover a comprehensive range of topics related to life skills. They are adapted in response to any current issues. During the inspection, classes were learning about personal hygiene, linked to local concerns about health. Similarly, academy leaders are alert to any concerns shared by other schools in the locality, for example about extremist views. Curriculum plans show that, following staff training in the government's 'Prevent' strategy, additional topics have been included in lessons to cover the risks of extremism and radicalisation. However, the academy's safeguarding audit, action plan and improvement plan do not show clearly how improvements to safeguarding are managed, when they take place and who is responsible for ensuring they are completed and effective.

Pupils and their parents and carers value the distinctive staff roles and responsibilities that combine to keep pupils safe. For example, they know who they should speak to should they have any concerns or worries about their own safety or that of others. This includes the clear guidance given to pupils when they go on school visits and work experience. The identities of the designated safeguarding lead and the deputy lead are displayed prominently. Both staff show clear leadership of safeguarding and child protection in the academy. Specialists such as the academy's own education welfare officer, nurse and careers adviser complement the support provided by teaching staff. All staff receive annual safeguarding training and regular updates. Their suitability to work with pupils is checked and recorded appropriately. Safer recruitment training ensures that academy leaders and governors appoint staff who meet statutory requirements. Pupils who are in the care of the local authority greatly appreciate the sensitivity and confidentiality with which their safety and well-being are checked in the academy. However, they are not sufficiently involved in the academy's 'buddy' systems and pupil leadership roles in which they can show care and consideration for others.

A strong feature of the academy's safeguarding provision is the support provided for families. This includes the work of academy 'ambassadors' whose 971 family visits in the last school year have contributed to improved attendance and low exclusion levels. Although disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make less progress than their peers, better attendance is helping to improve their chance of catching up. Work with families across the schools in the trust also helps pupils to make a better start when they join the academy in Year 7 because earlier knowledge of their needs is helping to tailor support to those needs. The academy's 'summer school' and 'Saturday school' also contribute to pupils feeling safe and well supported, including pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Pupils in Year 7 felt reassured by the 'student expectations' displayed around the academy, which state that they can 'expect all adults to help us, trust us, respect us, to care about us and show empathy'.

The academy's safeguarding policies take full account of government documentation, including 'Keeping children safe in education'. All staff are expected to be familiar with this key document. The extent to which teachers apply the academy's policies routinely is evaluated through lesson observations conducted by the academy's leaders and through checks by governors, in particular by the community governor who leads on safeguarding. Most classrooms and pupils' books contain health and safety rules where appropriate, although these were not universally seen at this early stage of the school year. Regular, detailed reports for the governing body contribute to governors' secure knowledge of the academy's safeguarding procedures and an understanding of their effectiveness. Some governors use their familiarity with the locality or their experience of employment in sectors such as engineering to question the appropriateness of the academy's policies and practice. The challenge they provide is helping to prepare pupils for a safe and successful stage of life, including further learning, when they leave the

academy. The academy's checks on work experience placements through an external provider are effective. The use of a health and safety log raises pupils' awareness of how to keep themselves safe in the workplace.

### **External support**

Academy leaders work positively and effectively with a range of external agencies, including services offered by the local authority such as the 'Troubled Families' programme, social care services and the Fire and Rescue Service. Local training used by the academy has focused on a range of relevant topics, including child sexual exploitation, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse, mental health, radicalisation, teenage relationship abuse, sexting and e-safety. The academy also works with a range of charities including 'Open Door', 'Catch 22' and 'Coram'. The academy works in partnership with The Gateway Learning Community to share support among the four academies and one free school that serve the local area. The designated safeguarding lead supports other academies in developing and sharing best practice in safeguarding. Links with other education providers, including South Essex College and Treetops School, help to minimise the risk of pupils missing education.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Ensure that the academy's self-evaluation of safeguarding links clearly to the structure and content of the academy's improvement plan.
- Increase links with the local 'Prevent' team to implement plans aimed at keeping pupils safe from extremism and radicalisation.
- Ensure that checks on teaching and learning include an evaluation of teachers' implementation of safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Help pupils, including vulnerable pupils, take more responsibility for helping others feel safe and supported.

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

Yours sincerely

**Ian Middleton**

**Her Majesty's Inspector**