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14 November 2016

Ms Diane Pickering
Head of School
Driffield School and Sixth Form
Manorfield Road
Driffield
East Yorkshire
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Dear Ms Pickering

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Driffield School and Sixth Form

Following my visit with Fiona Dixon, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 13 October 2016, 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 school.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. They also met with senior leaders, safeguarding and behaviour leaders and the existing and prospective chairs of the governing body. Inspectors met the local authority improvement partner and held a conversation with senior safeguarding officers from the local authority. Inspectors also held formal meetings with groups of pupils from all year groups and talked to pupils in lessons and at break and at lunchtimes around the school site.

Inspectors scrutinised and discussed the school's behaviour and attendance records, safeguarding records and leaders' and governors' ongoing review of the school's action plan.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

Driffield School is much larger than the average-sized secondary school with 1,614 pupils on roll. The vast majority of pupils are White British with a very small proportion of pupils from other backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. A smaller proportion of pupils than typical leave or arrive at different points of the year.

The school has undergone significant staffing changes since the section 5 inspection in March 2016. The headteacher and associate headteacher have left the school. A new executive headteacher has been in place since 1 June 2016, and a new head of school was appointed in October 2016 and has already taken up post. An acting deputy headteacher has been appointed to oversee pastoral leadership. In addition, a number of senior colleagues with teaching and learning, safeguarding and subject expertise are providing extensive strategic and operational support. These colleagues are from The Education Alliance, a multi-academy trust that is developing collaborative partnerships with academies across the Humber region.

There have been considerable changes to governance. The previous chair of the governing body resigned after the section 5 inspection in March 2016 and an interim chair is in place. Four new governors have joined, with expertise in safeguarding, education, the police service and business. A substantive chair of the governing body is due to take up post when the school converts to an academy under The Education Alliance, a process that is anticipated to complete in January 2017.

Main findings

New leaders have worked strenuously to rectify the ineffectiveness of safeguarding identified at the section 5 inspection in March 2016. Leaders have developed a more positive safeguarding culture so that continual awareness of safeguarding permeates many aspects of school life. Additions to the safeguarding team have strengthened leadership capacity in this key area and all staff are now more acutely aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. New procedures for pupil movement have made the school site much safer. Although significant progress has been made in a short period of time, further action is needed to embed new systems and educate pupils in a more sustained manner on issues relating to their safety.

Leadership capacity has been considerably strengthened. The executive headteacher has brought key staff from The Alliance trust to provide expertise and strategic and operational support. In addition, existing staff have been given clearer responsibilities for monitoring behaviour and attendance. Staff training has been intensified and staff now have a clearer understanding of key safeguarding issues. This training is regularly updated. In discussions with staff, they demonstrated a strong awareness of safeguarding procedures and a good knowledge of the factors that would trigger their concerns over the welfare of a child. All staff meetings, including department meetings, have safeguarding as a standing agenda item, emphasising its heightened importance at all levels.

Governors have become more assiduous in following their duties to hold the school to account for safeguarding and the behaviour and welfare of pupils. Senior leaders meet every Monday evening to review the impact of the post-inspection action plan. A sub-group of governors meets the following morning to review this progress and further question leaders on impact. Three reviews of safeguarding involving the local authority and external partners have taken place since the section 5 inspection as governors are keen to bring additional checks to verify the school's progress. After their review of the pupil premium, governors are aware that monies to support the attendance of disadvantaged pupils were previously unfocused and new behaviour plans are now being developed. The forthcoming appointment of the school's own educational welfare officer will enable more direct capacity to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.

The school safeguarding team has been expanded to include two senior leaders and a full-time non-teaching safeguarding officer, with a brief to address ongoing concerns. In addition, the safeguarding assistant headteacher from The Education Alliance provides support and quality assurance. Inspectors found evidence of clear procedures for referring concerns over children's welfare. Inspectors could also see incidents where safeguarding leaders had pursued concerns with children's social services when they felt issues were not addressed seriously enough. New computerised systems for logging safeguarding concerns are leading to more effective record-keeping. Multi-agency links are strong and half-termly meetings take place with youth and family support teams and children's social services. As a result, actions are being taken to support pupils at an early stage before threats to their welfare become more serious. The school is also developing strong links with the prevention and education team to address safeguarding issues at an early stage before they escalate. This contributed to whole-school training for all pupils in summer 2016.

Behavioural systems have been standardised and are now regularly checked. Where previously different houses followed differing systems, new processes are consistent across all of the houses. The new behaviour and attendance leader meets regularly with pastoral leads to track behavioural concerns. Concerns are swiftly shared as pastoral leads meet at the end of each school day. While disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities remain more likely to be excluded internally or externally, leaders now have a more accurate picture and are developing more focused behaviour support plans.

Behaviour on site has improved. Bases for pastoral staff and senior leaders are evenly distributed and new zoning procedures provide regular supervision during lessons and at break and lunchtimes. Higher staff presence is leading to purposeful movement between lessons. Greater vigilance with registration practices means that in-school lateness is addressed and the whereabouts of vulnerable pupils followed up swiftly. New movement rules and restrictions on vehicle movement have rectified the potential hazards caused by on-site traffic. While leaders met initial resistance from some pupils, they have been forthright in implementing new protocols to make it clear that changes are in pupils' best interests and are here to stay. An initial increase in fixed-term exclusions has resulted as new leaders have imposed higher behavioural expectations.

In discussions with pupils, many identified improvements in behaviour. They feel more confident in the procedures to address bullying and feel that incidents of bullying have decreased. More rigorous and widespread consultation with pupils is providing a better picture of their views. While some feel that pathways are more crowded, they understand the rationale behind movement change. They realise that heightened staff presence has improved behaviour and made the site safer. There are still improvements to be made. While the majority believe that toilet areas are well supervised, a small number of boys still feel that problems remain, with too many older pupils gathering in one toilet block and intimidating younger pupils. They also said that older pupils regularly steal footballs from them at lunchtime. Although this was not evident on inspection, leaders still need to listen closely to pupils' concerns so that remaining problems can be addressed.

While the curriculum has begun to educate pupils more effectively on their wider personal safety and welfare, much more work is needed. In July 2016, all pupils in Year 9 had a full day's training with the prevention education team on issues relating to the dangers of sexting and sexual exploitation. However, one-off events are not providing pupils with a sustained awareness, and present tutor group systems prevent issues being discussed in age-appropriate ways. Education on issues relating to diversity, including sexual orientation and race, are not explored with sufficient depth. New leaders are aware of these gaps in provision but need to address this more swiftly.

The interim headteacher held a number of meetings with parents immediately after the inspection that placed the school into special measures. The new executive headteacher has continued this dialogue and local authority officers believe that concerns are now addressed more clearly. However, as concerns over bullying and behaviour go back over a long period of time, their legacy remains and it is important that additional action is taken to repair these vital relationships.

External support

The local authority has carried out two reviews of safeguarding and supported actions to improve safety on the school site. The local authority designated officer for safeguarding has also reviewed policies and procedures. A further review of safeguarding and training has been provided by a local expert. The Education Alliance has brought the expertise of its assistant headteacher for safeguarding to provide regular monitoring and review of the quality of safeguarding. Links with external agencies are now much stronger, with regular meetings with young persons and family support, children's social care and the prevention education team. Through its trust partnership, the school now has links with commissioning services for key aspects of children's welfare, including their social, emotional and mental health.

Priorities for further improvement

- Develop the curriculum so that pupils are more aware of how to keep themselves safe from homophobic behaviour, sexism, racism, sexual exploitation and other forms of discrimination and abuse.

- Refine the use of new safeguarding and behavioural recording systems to ensure that they are used consistently and accurately.
- Build stronger relationships with parents so that they are aware of the school's improvement journey and can contribute their views.
- Continue to listen closely to pupils' concerns so that strategies can be modified to take account of their needs.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for the East Riding of Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Kirtley
Her Majesty's Inspector