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Andrew Moss
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Moss

No formal designation inspection of Gordon's School

Following my visit with Colin Lankester, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 17 October 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This 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 a wide range of other documents and policies relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. Records of governing body meetings and reports of visits from external advisers were considered. Inspectors also considered leaders' records of pupils' attendance and behaviour. They met formally with you, the designated safeguarding lead and several groups of teachers, non-teaching staff and pupils. Inspectors also spoke informally to small groups of pupils at breaktime and lunchtime, and considered the views of parents recorded on Ofsted's Parent View survey. The lead inspector held a meeting with four members of the governing body, two of whom attended via telephone. Contact was made with the local authority designated officer, whose views were considered.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

Gordon's School is a slightly below-average-sized non-selective state boarding school which offers boarding and day places for up to 840 pupils aged 11 to 18. It converted to become an academy in January 2013 and is supported by the Gordon Foundation, an independent charitable trust founded in 1885. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with national figures, but a higher proportion of pupils than is typical nationally have an education, health and care plan. The percentage of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is well below the national average. The proportions of pupils who are from minority ethnic groups or speak English as an additional language are in line with national averages. A very small number of key stage 4 pupils attend alternative provision within the Surrey Heath Area Partnership for Education.

Gordon's School was last inspected by Ofsted in November 2014, when it was judged to be outstanding. The boarding provision was last inspected in March 2017 and judged to be outstanding.

Main findings

Together with governors and senior leaders, you lead a dedicated and well-trained staff who have very high aspirations for your pupils, both academically and pastorally. Gordon's School offers a warm and welcoming community where pupils feel safe and well supported by the adults who care for them. The house system and the pastoral support team provide well-organised layers of care that meet the needs of individual pupils very well. This enables pupils to focus on their studies, benefit from the extremely rich and broad curriculum on offer, and achieve impressive academic success. All of the pupils that we met during the inspection knew who they would speak to should they have any concerns. They feel confident that staff and other pupils would support them should they need any help. Information about key staff to contact if needed, both within and beyond school, is readily available to pupils and their parents. Several Year 7 pupils, and other pupils new to the school, expressed very positive views about how quickly and easily they had settled into the school. They said that they trusted staff to deal with any issues they may need to raise. Feedback from parents via Parent View echoes this trust in the school, with the overwhelming majority of parents who expressed a view confirming that their children feel safe and happy here.

Governors and senior leaders demonstrated first-class leadership by responding decisively and immediately to address issues raised by three historical staffing concerns, two of which related to incidents at previous schools. In addition, senior leaders subsequently refined and improved the school's already well-established safeguarding systems, and have ensured that governors have been kept well informed through regular reports of safeguarding, behaviour and welfare issues.

Governors hold leaders stringently to account for their work to keep pupils safe. The

chair of the governing body acts as the designated safeguarding governor and works alongside school leaders to check the quality of safeguarding arrangements in the school. Minutes of governors' safeguarding meetings demonstrate how governors have regularly challenged leaders to refine and enhance provision for pupils and to strengthen safeguarding systems still further. As a result, leaders have improved several safeguarding procedures, updated policies, reinforced the staff code of conduct and embedded a shared culture of vigilance across the school. Leaders routinely and systematically monitor, evaluate and refine safeguarding training and procedures and can demonstrate significant improvements that have occurred over the past three years. Recent improvements include refining lock-down procedures, improving CCTV cameras, introducing traffic-calming measures around the school site and developing biometric security systems across the school.

New arrangements for interviewing potential staff, coupled with revised induction packages, have strengthened safeguarding checks prior to recruitment and the training given to new recruits. Appropriate safeguarding and qualifications checks are made on all staff, and meticulous records are maintained. All staff, volunteers and governors receive regular, helpful and wide-ranging training which meets requirements and is appropriate to their role in school. Experts from beyond the school support the designated safeguarding lead effectively to deliver this training, providing an added dimension to the staff's understanding of pertinent issues. Leaders ensure that staff have easy access to a wide range of relevant documents that support their training, starting during their induction to the school. All staff are routinely tested following their regular safeguarding training. Leaders make excellent use of this information to monitor each individual's understanding of key issues, review the impact of different training and provide any 'top-up' training that may be required.

Staff express absolute clarity about what to do if they have a concern about a pupil, and describe well-rehearsed routines for seeking support and guidance from the designated safeguarding lead where appropriate. They understand their specific responsibilities relating to e-safety and reporting any suspected cases of abuse or radicalisation. Staff are clear about their responsibilities arising from the school's whistleblowing policy. Leaders issue regular updates to all staff about individual pupils for whom there is concern, as well as providing emerging information about topical issues for staff to be aware of when carrying out their work. Staff challenge each other readily about their understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities, which contributes to the strong culture evident in the school.

Leaders' strategies for monitoring the attendance, behaviour, health and well-being of pupils are similarly well developed and under constant review by governors. Senior leaders maintain detailed records and analyse patterns over time, producing thorough reports and analyses for governors. Staff refer any concerns, no matter how small, promptly to the designated safeguarding lead, and use well-established systems to record them. This enables safeguarding leaders and the pastoral team to monitor and support effectively any pupils for whom patterns of concern begin to

emerge. Pastoral leaders ensure prompt and personalised support is put in place to ensure that potentially vulnerable pupils are kept safe and supported well. Senior leaders work effectively with experts from beyond the school, providing challenge to external agencies where necessary, in order to provide useful and timely additional support to pupils and their families where required.

Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe through a very well-planned approach to personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. Leaders review the PSHE curriculum regularly to check that it meets the needs of specific groups of pupils appropriately. Tutors show a well-developed awareness of local, national and international issues which are pertinent to pupils in the school. The effective teaching of PSHE throughout the school ensures that pupils' needs are considered carefully. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is promoted exceptionally well through the house system, and is embedded within PSHE and the wider curriculum. In addition, pupils are taught to keep themselves safe and to consider the safety of others through their engagement in the school's exceptionally rich and diverse extra-curricular activities. Gordon's School offers a particularly wide range of high-quality sporting, academic and artistic trips, visits and activities which are highly valued by pupils. Leaders ensure that staff are well trained and have easy access to suitable resources. This enables event organisers to carry out detailed risk assessments for each of these activities. As a result of this well-organised and rich curriculum, pupils have a strong understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They are very well prepared for their next stages of education and employment, and for life in modern Britain.

External support

You, your senior leaders and governors constantly review the quality of the school's safeguarding arrangements. For example, you check the quality of safeguarding arrangements annually through an audit carried out by governors. In addition, governors have commissioned external reviews of safeguarding arrangements from lawyers and have acted on the advice given. The school belongs to several local and national networks enabling them to access and share best practice. School leaders use experts from beyond the school to ensure that staff training is of very high quality. For example, recently, an independent e-safety expert has delivered training to staff, and presented information to pupils and parents on how to keep themselves safe online. Leaders consider carefully the findings from these and other activities, adapting the school's procedures where appropriate, so that the quality of safeguarding arrangements remains as effective as it can be.

Leaders and governors work increasingly closely with colleagues from the local authority. Safeguarding leaders regularly attend multi-agency meetings, ensure regular communication and make sure that detailed records are kept. Leaders are proactive in challenging external agencies when necessary, to ensure they receive timely responses to any questions or information required. Leaders review and share their effective practice with colleagues from beyond the school, contributing

to the ongoing development of safeguarding services across the local authority.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Surrey. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Newberry

Her Majesty's Inspector