

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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21 November 2017

Mr Graham Steele  
Interim Headteacher  
Wennington Hall School  
Lodge Lane  
Wennington  
Lancaster  
Lancashire  
LA2 8NS

Dear Mr Steele

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Wennington Hall School**

Following my visit with Michael Charnley, Social Care Compliance Inspector, to your school on 7 November 2017, 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.

This inspection was aligned with a progress monitoring visit of the boarding provision at the school, the outcome of which is contained in a separate report that will be published on Ofsted's website.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We met with you, other senior leaders, the designated safeguarding leads, a representative from the local authority, two groups of staff and pupils from key stages 3 and 4. A meeting was also held with the chair of the governing body and one other governor.

We observed pupils' behaviour at break, lunch and changeover times. The school's own analyses of attendance, behaviour, use of restraint and exclusions were evaluated. Inspectors took into account 11 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

### **Context**

Wennington Hall School is a day and residential school. All pupils are identified as having special educational needs related to their behaviour and have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. An increasing number of pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs.

The school was last inspected in December 2016 and judged to require special measures. Since then there have been three headteachers and significant changes to staffing. You joined the school as interim headteacher in September 2017. There is currently a large number of agency staff working at the school. Most members of the governing body left all at once in March 2017, leaving a skeletal governing body to address the significant areas for improvement identified at the last inspection.

The school was issued with a directive academy order in January 2017. Since that date, no progress has been made towards the school becoming a sponsored academy. The local authority continues to work with the regional schools commissioner to identify a suitable sponsor for the school. However, there was no information available at the time of inspection to indicate that this situation will be resolved in the near future. Such uncertainty poses an added challenge to the school community.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management in ensuring that safeguarding and child protection arrangements keep pupils safe**

In December 2016 the school was judged as inadequate, as was the degree to which the pupils were protected. Leaders have secured the aspects of safeguarding that were found wanting at the last inspection. The arrangements to keep pupils safe are more robust and the safeguarding culture within the school is improving. On a number of occasions it was reported to inspectors that the positive changes that have been made more recently have enabled staff to understand why previous practices were not acceptable.

The designated senior leaders have all received training to an appropriate level and demonstrate a clear understanding of their role. Their teaching commitments are small and this allows at least one of them to be available all the time and respond quickly, should any incidents or concerns occur. The records that leaders keep are much improved. Although records show clearly where intervention has taken place, it is not sufficiently clear whether the steps taken by managers have had their intended impact.

You have improved the quality of communication between home, residential

provision and the school. Daily morning meetings are held and this means that staff are kept up to date with any issues or concerns arising with the pupils. This is helping to improve morale, but there is still much more work to be done in this regard. The high turnover of staff is a source of unsettling upheaval for the school community. Staff feel more able to express any concerns or complaints that they may have and they are confident that there are procedures in place to deal with their concerns. However, the detail and accuracy with which the records of complaints and concerns are kept needs to be strengthened.

The single central record meets requirements. The processes for recruitment and induction have been tightened. Appropriate checks are undertaken and applicants are clear about the safeguarding checks that will be carried out. Job descriptions outline the importance of safeguarding and the primacy of this responsibility when working with children and young people. Staff receive regular training and updates. They are clear about their role and responsibilities in terms of following the school's safeguarding policies and procedures and they know what to do should they have any concerns. There is a rolling programme of training to make sure that anyone who may have missed a session has the opportunity to attend in the near future. This is particularly important given the frequency with which agency staff work at the school. All agency staff are provided with appropriate induction.

Record-keeping surrounding restraint by staff has improved significantly. The records seen by inspectors clearly show consistency between the record of incidents file and the restraint log book. The recording system also incorporates the use of restraints and safeguarding incidents, including the use of body maps where injuries are sustained, as well as notifications made to relevant agencies. Senior managers' oversight of restraint practice has also increased in rigour.

The policies and procedures reflect statutory guidance and are readily available on the website and upon request. The governor responsible for safeguarding regularly checks the single central record and discusses safeguarding with the headteacher on a weekly basis. She has undertaken a range of training relating to the role and she demonstrates a secure knowledge and understanding of her responsibilities.

The attendance of pupils is lower than it was this time last year. The poor attendance of a few pupils has notably skewed the overall figures. The school works hard with pupils and their families to improve attendance. The number of exclusions is higher than it was last year. The turbulence in staffing has had a detrimental effect on a number of the pupils and this has influenced their behaviour. The school's own information indicates that the number of fixed-term exclusions is falling and that behaviour is beginning to improve. Inspectors saw positive behaviour during the inspection and the pupils said that behaviour was getting better and was dealt with appropriately. The pupils spoke to inspectors about the systems in place to help them conform to boundaries and expectations in behaviour. They expressed the view that they felt safe within the school and found staff to be approachable and supportive.

Leadership and management is in a precarious situation because of the absence of a substantive headteacher and a fully functioning governing body. Much work has been done to ensure that safeguarding is effective and leaders are working at making the practices even more robust. This has taken up a significant amount of time and only happened recently. Because of the lack of capacity, very little has improved in other aspects of the school's provision. Leaders and governors are working hard, but the challenges and difficulties that face the school are significant. The local authority has been tardy in its response and support for the school following the last inspection.

### **External support**

The local authority carried out a safeguarding audit in April 2017 which made a series of recommendations for the school to act upon. This audit also reviewed all historic records of incidents to ensure that nothing had been missed. An external consultant supported the school during a particularly vulnerable period. Two national leaders of education (NLEs) have visited the school, but none of their recommendations have been addressed.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Continue to strengthen the quality of record-keeping.
- Stabilise leadership and management, including governance.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Jones  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**