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13 December 2017

Mrs T Young  
Headteacher  
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West Midlands  
WV6 0BY

Dear Mrs Young

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Wolverhampton Girls' High School**

Following my visit with Bianka Zemke, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 29–30 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, pupils' personal development and aspects of the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and evaluated the policy and practice of safeguarding. Inspectors met with the headteacher and with other leaders, including those responsible for safeguarding. An inspector met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body and the governor responsible for safeguarding. Inspectors held discussions with various groups of pupils, both formally and informally, and met with members of staff.

Inspectors visited lessons and tutorial sessions and an assembly. An inspector scrutinised the curriculum planning for personal, social, health and careers education (PSHCE) and other information relating to pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare. The school self-evaluation and improvement plan were also considered. The lead inspector reviewed the 78 responses made to the online survey, Parent View.

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

Safeguarding is effective. Inspection findings raised no serious concerns about pupils' personal development or the effectiveness of the aspects of leadership and management that were inspected. Inspectors did identify areas of work where further improvement would strengthen the overall effectiveness of this school.

## **Context**

Wolverhampton Girls' High School converted to an academy in April 2014. The predecessor school was inspected in March 2009 and the overall effectiveness was judged to be outstanding. Since that inspection, a new headteacher and chair of governors have been appointed. Other members of the senior leadership team were appointed more recently, including two deputy headteachers. This year, the school reorganised the structure of pastoral support. These changes included introduction of tutor groups, which contain pupils from different year groups, and appointment of additional staff to lead the house system. Additional pastoral support staff have also been appointed.

Wolverhampton Girls' High School is an average-sized, selective, secondary girls' school. Almost all pupils who attend the school have high levels of prior attainment. Just over half of the pupils are from minority ethnic heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average.

The school has a track record of high pupil academic achievement and success. The progress that pupils make by the end of Year 11 is consistently well above the national average. Pupils' attainment is equally high. In 2017 more than four in every five pupils achieved the English baccalaureate. Students' progress by the end of the sixth form in 2015 was well below average, compared to students of similar starting points nationally. Leaders' actions to address this have been highly effective. In 2016, students' progress improved and was in line with national progress rates. Leaders expect further improvements following analysis of attainment in 2017, although national comparisons are not yet available.

## **Main findings**

Arrangements to ensure safe recruitment of staff are robust and accurate. Governors and commissioned consultants routinely check these records. Minor gaps in records identified during the inspection were easily rectified. Leaders ensure that comprehensive risk assessments are complete and that first-aid provision is available on trips and visits. Staff receive training and regular updates about safeguarding and child protection. Leaders check the effectiveness of this training afterwards and respond to any gaps in staff awareness. Feedback from these

checks is generic, rather than targeted to specific members of staff. Members of staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and how to respond in the event of concerns or a disclosure from a pupil. Leaders with designated roles for safeguarding receive enhanced training to effectively support their work. Several staff are designated safeguarding leaders, to make sure that there is sufficient capacity within the school.

Leaders' approach to managing referrals of concerns about pupils is rigorous. Detailed, high-quality records are kept. These enable leaders to check on the progress of actions taken, including those that involve external agencies. The school has established good relationships with, but is not afraid to challenge, a range of appropriate external agencies, to make sure that pupils are well supported.

Governors are very clear of their responsibilities to ensure that pupils are safe and well cared for when at school. Governors are able to access training to keep their knowledge up to date. A designated governor for safeguarding uses well-enhanced training and professional expertise to routinely discuss this aspect of the school with leaders. The designated governor provides executive summaries to the governing body. Governors have recently started to receive an annual safeguarding report from leaders. Governors are well informed about the school's approach to ensuring pupils' safety. They routinely ask questions of leaders to challenge and support this important aspect of the school's provision.

School records show very low incidences of bullying and derogatory and discriminatory behaviour. Pupils are pleasant and responsible young adults who support the school well through taking on a wide range of leadership opportunities. Exclusions from the school are well below national averages. Such sanctions are used consistently with the school's behaviour policy. There have been no repeat exclusions over recent years, demonstrating the effectiveness of how this sanction is used. Pupils value highly their education and their attendance is consistently above the national average. They display very positive attitudes towards learning in lessons.

Leaders have developed a wide range of provision aimed at supporting pupils' social, emotional and mental health. This is effectively supported by a well-taught PSHCE programme. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and promote their welfare in a wide range of situations. They understand risk and how to act in ways that reduce it. For example, during the inspection, pupils were learning about economic well-being. They were able to explain the implications of credit and debt for people in different financial circumstances. Year 7 pupils participate in regular lessons to specifically develop their resilience. For example, an inspector observed pupils identifying the personal qualities that will help them prepare for a charity fundraising event. Pupils readily identified teamwork, organisation and compromise as important skills. However, they were less clear about how their emotions may affect their performance. Staff are positive role models for pupils. They share appropriate experiences of how resilience has helped them succeed.

Leaders have recently reviewed thoroughly and comprehensively the school's pastoral provision. Through this process, they have gained a clearer understanding of how well different aspects of pastoral care support pupils at the school. Governors have scrutinised and fully support leaders' strategic response to this review. One clear action following the review has been to locate pupil support services in 'The Hub'. It is too soon to evaluate the long-term impact of changes that were implemented at the start of the school year. Leaders are collecting information about these changes. For example, comprehensive logs collect and record pupils' use of The Hub. At present, too little useful analysis is carried out using this information. This means that leaders are not able to understand clearly how well some of their approaches to supporting pupils' social, emotional and mental health actually work. This acts as a barrier to more rapid improvement, and reduces governors' ability to hold leaders to account for the effectiveness of the school's provision.

Leaders have responded to the recent pastoral review by making some structural changes to the school's tutorial system. Pupils are now members of tutor groups that include pupils of different ages. Although these changes are recent, pupils are already establishing friendships and support exists between pupils from different year groups. The new structure means that pupils will remain with the same tutor throughout their time at the school, allowing strong relationships to develop between pupils and tutors. Staff have been well prepared for these changes to their tutor role. There is some inconsistency in how positively pupils perceive the benefits of these changes, particularly among older pupils. Although leaders have promoted and reinforced the changes made, this has not been consistently successful. For example, leaders' survey before half term identified that 16% of pupils surveyed did not know where to find help during the school day.

Leaders involve parents and seek their views in a range of ways, including through questionnaires completed at parents' evenings. Leaders and governors take parents' concerns seriously. They investigate incidents in detail and consult with relevant staff to ensure that the information they consider is correct. Leaders and governors make sure that their actions comply with the requirements of the school's complaints policy. Systems to deal with any allegations against staff are fully secure. Communication with the designated officer at the local authority is clear. As a result, leaders are able to take advice when needed and act effectively on it. Parental questionnaires demonstrate that parents are less positive about how well the school responds to any concerns they raise than other aspects of the school's provision.

Pupils receive high-quality careers information, advice and guidance. They are able to make informed choices about their option choices and career aspirations. A very high proportion of pupils successfully move on to further and higher education. The small proportion who progress onto other routes, such as apprenticeships, are well supported. Leaders make sure that an extremely wide range of extra-curricular opportunities is provided for pupils. Pupils are encouraged to participate in clubs and activities that include sports, adventure and arts. They enjoy participating in

inter-house competitions. Pupils recognise and appreciate the range of experiences they have, and that these opportunities benefit their personal development. Leaders have decided that pupils will have some opportunities to experience learning and wider participation in mixed-gender contexts. Some pupils told inspectors they would welcome more of these opportunities to prepare them for their next steps.

### **External support**

Leaders benefit from a wide range of external support and welcome the challenge this support brings. A school improvement officer commissioned by leaders regularly visits the school and validates the judgements leaders make. Leaders direct the school improvement officer's support in response to the school's strategic priorities. This work focuses on different areas within the school, as required. This support contributes successfully to the school's overall effectiveness, including sustaining pupils' academic outcomes. Leaders confirmed their judgement that the culture of safeguarding is effective through a recently commissioned external review of safeguarding practice at the school.

Leaders utilised effectively external support when they carried out a far-reaching and comprehensive pastoral review last year. For example, the review considered how other schools with a similar context approach pastoral support. Recent external training has raised staff awareness about ways to support pupils' social, emotional and mental health.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- routine analysis of pastoral information identifies what further improvements can be made
- an increasing number of pupils understand the roles and responsibilities of pastoral staff
- improved communication with parents informs them of actions taken in response to any issues they raise.

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 Wolverhampton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rob Hackfath  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**