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8 March 2018

Dr Michael Beverley  
Washington Academy  
Spout Lane  
Washington  
Tyne and Wear  
NE37 2AA

Dear Dr Beverley,

### **No formal designation inspection of Washington Academy**

Following my visit with Angela White, Ofsted Inspector, and Marian Thomas, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 27 February 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and the time you took to discuss behaviour and safeguarding in your school.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with the no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills was concerned about behaviour and safeguarding at the school.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors considered evidence that included:

- observations of pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning in lessons
- observations of pupils' behaviour throughout the day, including discussions with pupils and parents
- documentary evidence including the single central record, safeguarding procedures, the training of staff in behaviour management and attendance and exclusion information
- discussions with school leaders and staff
- discussions with the designated officer for safeguarding in Sunderland.

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

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

**Context**

Washington Academy is a smaller than average secondary school of 532 pupils. Since its predecessor school, Washington School, was last inspected the number of pupils on roll has fallen. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is high and double the national average. The proportion of those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average and those who come from a minority ethnic background or whose first language is not English is low. There have been a few difficulties in staffing levels lately caused through illness. The school also hosts a unit to support pupils who have moderate to severe learning difficulties.

**Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Since you became principal of Washington Academy in September 2017, you have rapidly enhanced all procedures the school has in place to support the safeguarding of pupils. You and your leaders know your roles well and have ensured that safeguarding is both fit for purpose and enshrined within the culture of the school. Staff know procedures well, are trained well and receive regular and timely updates both for safeguarding and for managing pupils' behaviour around the site.

Pupils' health, well-being and safety are further enhanced by relevant display work around the site emphasising how pupils can remain safe online from bullying. Pupils say that they are constantly reminded about their safety in all aspects of their lives, through the programme of assemblies and personal development in the school. Pupils know who to go to when they need support and say that teachers do their best when dealing with the poor behaviour displayed by a very small and identified group of pupils. However, they do say that these pupils do disrupt their learning on rare occasions. The school has employed a counsellor to further support pupils who may need extra emotional help.

Around the school, pupils' behaviour appears purposeful and polite. In most of the lessons visited, they were calm, courteous and focused on their work. There was no evidence during the inspection of any poor behaviour in classrooms that was not managed well. The pupils we spoke to both in formal meetings and through more informal interviews during break and lunchtime were polite and helpful to both the inspection team and to staff. The way you have ensured that staff are given further training in building positive relationships with pupils, for example through learning how to de-escalate difficult situations, has helped them to converse and relate to pupils in a calm, considered and positive way.

Your current safeguarding governor states that they are not involved in relevant safeguarding audits, but governors do receive termly safeguarding reports. You

stated that governors' roles and responsibilities are to be considered at the next full governors' meeting to maximise their involvement and impact around the school.

You are proactive and honest in your communications with all partners, including governors, the multi-academy trust, your staff and with outside agencies responsible for safeguarding. This is further helping you to ensure that the school's processes and routines for safeguarding are fit for purpose.

Pupils' attendance at the school is close to the national average but you acknowledge it is not as high as it could be. However, the support and practices you have instigated through your pastoral team in increasing direct communication with parents and carers have begun to pay dividends. Year 11 pupils are now attending much more regularly. This achievement is celebrated well around the site with electronic display boards tracking attendance in real time and pupils as a result can respond to the attendance challenges presented. Pupils' punctuality to school and to lessons is good. Fixed-term exclusion rates at the school are currently higher than they should be, and you readily acknowledge this. You state that the main reason for this is so that you can re-establish expected good behaviour routines and to set higher standards. As new routines embed, you expect reductions in these rates and you already have evidence of the positive impact your teams are having in this through a reduction in repeat exclusions.

You have evidenced clearly the impact that a very small and identified group of individuals are having on the learning environment around school. You are trying a number of methods to improve their behaviour. These include supporting teachers to be consistent in their approaches to classroom management and the use of an isolation room for the few most poorly behaved. While this works for some pupils, you accept that it is not working for all. However, you and your teams, with the support of the trust, are keen to continue to develop different approaches to improve the behaviour of pupils who find it difficult to behave well in school, as well as ensuring that the inclusive nature of the school is maintained.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Increase the involvement of governors in all areas of safeguarding to further strengthen all procedures and processes to keep pupils safe.
- Develop strategies to engage the very small but identified group of pupils who find it difficult to achieve good behaviour so that they are able to study and achieve well without disrupting others.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive of the multi-academy trust, Consilium, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Sunderland. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Colin Scott  
**Ofsted Inspector**