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Ms Lisa Jepson
Interim Principal
UTC@harbourside
Railway Approach
Newhaven
East Sussex
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Dear Ms Jepson

No formal designation inspection of UTC@harbourside

Following my visit to your school on 19 December 2018, 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 safeguarding arrangements at the school.

Evidence

I 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 relating to the local authority's recent review of safeguarding were considered.

I reviewed leaders' records of pupils' attendance and behaviour. I met formally with you, other leaders and a group of pupils and students. I also spoke informally to small groups of pupils at lunchtime. I held a telephone conversation with the chair of the governing body. Contact was made with the local authority's senior manager for safeguarding, whose views and reports of visits were considered.

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

safeguarding is effective.

Context

The university technical college (UTC) is sponsored by four partners: Aldridge Education, Lewes District Council, Veolia Waste Management Ltd and the University of Brighton. In line with all UTCs, it is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school. UTC@harbourside opened in September 2015 with space for 600 pupils. However, last July the governors announced that the UTC would close at the end of this academic year due to, 'failing to recruit enough students to become financially stable'. Consequently, there has been no new intake of pupils during the current academic year. At present, there are 18 pupils in Year 11 and 48 students on roll in key stage 5 completing their courses.

The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is well above national figures. The percentage of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is below the national average. The proportions of pupils who are from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language are well below national averages.

The UTC was last inspected by Ofsted in May 2018, when it was judged to be inadequate and to require special measures. During this inspection the arrangements for safeguarding were judged to be not effective, and several serious safeguarding matters were identified.

Following the inspection, governors immediately recruited a new interim principal, restructured the senior leadership team and commissioned an external review of safeguarding.

Main findings

Governors took decisive action in appointing you as interim principal immediately after the previous inspection. You have shown strong and determined leadership and have wasted no time in working with governors and your restructured senior leadership team to address quickly the previous safeguarding failings. Staff now provide appropriately organised layers of care that meet the needs of individual pupils effectively. The majority of the pupils that I met during the inspection reported that they knew who to report any serious concerns to, and trusted senior staff to take appropriate action. Information about key staff to contact if needed, together with wider safeguarding information, both within and beyond school, is made available to pupils.

You have demonstrated considerable resilience and strong leadership since your arrival and have introduced a more effective culture of safeguarding within the school. The chair of the governing body commissioned the local authority to produce an external review of safeguarding last term. Through your open and honest self-reflection and decisive actions, you wasted no time in addressing the procedural errors and training requirements identified in the report. Together, you

sought and have embraced a range of appropriate external advice and support where necessary. The latest report of visit from the local authority recognises that all recommendations made during these external reviews have been actioned. New, clearer systems and additional training have ensured that leaders, governors and staff are better informed about safeguarding, attendance and welfare issues, and procedures have been improved. Senior leaders are aware that more needs to be done to embed these improvements and ensure a consistently rigorous approach during the last year of operation of the UTC.

Governors now hold leaders more effectively 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. Safeguarding is a regular feature of governors' meetings. Governors have successfully challenged leaders to improve safeguarding systems significantly and ensure they are fit for purpose. As a result, leaders have developed an appropriately vigilant safeguarding culture throughout the UTC. They have introduced a raft of improved policies and safety risk assessments and better staff training, and have significantly improved record-keeping.

Appropriate safeguarding and qualifications checks are made on all staff, and suitable records are maintained. All staff, volunteers and governors receive regular, helpful training which meets requirements and is appropriate to their role in school. Consequently, staff and pupils know what to do if they have a concern about any pupil, and can describe well-rehearsed routines for seeking support from the designated safeguarding lead where appropriate. Leaders have ensured that staff understand their specific responsibilities relating to e-safety and reporting any suspected cases of abuse or radicalisation. While leaders have ensured that all staff have received training and information, more needs to be done to monitor the impact of this training and to check the staff's levels of understanding of relevant procedures.

In this very small school staff know each of the pupils very well, and communication among the staff is now much more effective. Staff are vigilant to the needs of pupils with SEND, and better systems are in place to track and monitor any vulnerable pupils.

Leaders' monitoring of attendance, behaviour and well-being of pupils has improved. Leaders have successfully involved pupils and students in the creation of the UTC's new behaviour policy. Its aims of 'be prepared, be respectful and be the best version of you' have helped to foster better behaviour around the site and to reduce exclusions and incidents of lateness. In the past, pupils' very poor attendance has presented a serious barrier to their learning, and raised safeguarding concerns. Overall attendance is well below average for similar schools, and persistent absence rates remain very high. However, you and your team are resolutely focused on targeting improvement. Staff are working hard with families to support them in bringing their children to school regularly and on time. Over the

past term there have been some encouraging early signs of improvements to attendance from this very low starting point. You have rightly given top priority to ensuring that this continues to improve.

The designated safeguarding lead has put in place prompt and personalised support to ensure that potentially vulnerable pupils are kept safe and supported well. The school works effectively with experts from beyond the school in order to provide useful and timely additional support to pupils and their families where required.

Leaders have recently enriched their planning of the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. However, it is too soon to see the impact of this work. Pupils report historic weaknesses and current inconsistencies in the quality of teaching of PSHE. When questioned, pupils do not have a well-developed awareness of British values, e-safety or how to keep themselves and others safe. Consequently, they are not sufficiently well prepared for their next stages of education or for life in modern Britain. Leaders are aware that there is more work to do in this area.

External support

Leaders and governors work closely with colleagues from East Sussex local authority. The new designated safeguarding lead regularly attends multi-agency meetings, ensures regular communication, and makes sure that detailed records are kept. Records demonstrate that leaders have challenged external agencies when necessary, to ensure that the agencies provide timely responses to any questions or requests for information.

Leaders and governors cooperated fully and worked closely with external consultants from the local authority during the recent review of safeguarding. The local authority has supported the UTC with new model policies and staff training. These policies have been adopted and implemented effectively, but leaders are aware that more needs to be done to make the policies, and other relevant safeguarding information, available on the UTC website.

Priorities for further improvement

Leaders and governors need to develop a more confident and secure embedding of the UTC's new and improved safeguarding procedures by ensuring that:

- recently improved planning for PSHE, together with better teaching, has a greater impact on pupils' confidence to express their understanding of British values, e-safety and how to keep themselves and others safe
- the website has the most up-to-date policies, together with safeguarding information, for parents and pupils
- robust and regular analysis enables attendance to continue to improve and

persistent absence to decline still further.

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

Yours sincerely

Matthew Newberry
Her Majesty's Inspector