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Mr Andrew Davis
Principal
Exmouth Community College
Gipsy Lane
Exmouth
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Dear Mr Davis

No formal designation inspection of Exmouth Community College

Following my visit with Ann Cox, Lydia Pride and Andrew Stittle, Ofsted Inspectors, to your school on 16 and 17 January 2019, 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, aspects of the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school (including governance), and personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils at the school.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements and met with the principal, groups of pupils, the chair of the governing body and senior leaders. Telephone calls were made to the school improvement partner and an alternative provision.

In addition, inspectors looked at governors' minutes; curriculum plans for personal, social, health and economic education; attendance and exclusion data; and logs of behaviour and bullying incidents. The analysis of accident and incident logs was evaluated as well as education, health and care plans and individual health care plans.

Meetings were held with teachers and support staff, both formally and informally, and lessons were observed across a wide range of subjects and year groups.

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

safeguarding is effective.

Context

This is a larger-than-average secondary school with 2,250 pupils on roll. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is lower than the national average; the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than the national average; the proportion of pupils included in the register of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is higher than the national average as it is for those with education, health and care plans; the level of mobility of pupils and turnover of staff is lower than the national average. Most staff have been at the school for over 10 years.

Since your appointment in September 2017, you have provided a school where pupils are safe. Staff teach them about keeping themselves safe effectively. Many sixth-form students spoke of how they stayed on at school because they have strong support. They appreciate the safety of the school.

You have made the site more secure with additional boundary fencing and electronic gates. There is no unprotected access to the site once the school day has begun. This is important because the school is set on a large, split site with many entrances and exits.

Pupils behave well around the site and in lessons. Through pupil voice, you have identified areas where pupils felt less safe and have made sure there is a staff presence at duty times. Seeing several hundred pupils cross the bridge between the two sites at lesson changeover, in an orderly way, is testament to the understanding of appropriate behaviour protocols. You are encouraging better behaviour through praise and rewards. You use an electronic system which allows pupils to follow their behaviour points on their mobile phones at home. Permanent exclusions have reduced from eight to one this year. Leaders and teachers log behaviour incidents regularly. There is a decrease in logs of cyber bullying. There are many interventions in place and the use of internal isolation is effective and reducing fixed-term exclusions. The school has a centre where pupils with emotional needs can go. Some pupils are educated here when being in a classroom is too stressful. This is a successful area of the school and you want to develop this further.

The checks on staff recruitment are secure and paperwork is well organised. Administrative staff have ensured that staff have current checks from the Disclosure and Barring Service. Several governors and senior leaders have received training on safer recruitment procedures. At least one of the trained personnel attends interviews. The clerk to the governors keeps necessary policies and procedures to do with safeguarding up to date. The website had been in a state of transition but new policies came online on the first morning of the inspection.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and the deputies receive training at a suitable level. Staff receive the appropriate annual training and regular updates. Senior leaders have done additional online training on safeguarding. Governors receive annual safeguarding training from the DSL. The chair of the governing body is acutely aware of the need to keep pupils safe in this very large school and has appointed an additional governor with responsibility for safeguarding this year. This means that strategic leaders share the checking of the many aspects of safeguarding, which is more effective. Staff have a secure knowledge of the recent updates in 'Keeping children safe in education', 2018, especially peer-on-peer bullying, the 'Prevent' duty and issues such as female genital mutilation.

The school's internet safety procedures are exceptionally strong. There is no pupil access to Wi-Fi in the school. Pupils are very aware of the dangers of the internet, such as unprotected social media and sexting. They are less secure about the use of the internet for recruitment to extremism and terrorism or what signs to look for if there are concerns about another pupil's possible involvement.

Leaders' monitoring of health and safety in its widest remit is a strength of the school. Staff keep fire safety evacuation logs and incident and accident logs up to date. Leaders analyse them to check trends so that additional training can be prompt when needed. Similarly, risk assessments in practical subjects, such as the sciences and technology, are secure. Pupils are aware of what equipment they need. Older pupils make their own risk assessments correctly on protective apparatus and clothing. Equipment and medication and medical supplies are kept safely and orderly by well-trained staff and teachers.

The leader of disadvantaged pupils and the special educational needs coordinator are working together to ensure the safety of any vulnerable pupils. Risk assessments for trips and visits are comprehensive. Staff tailor the trip according to pupils' needs. They provide one-to-one support when necessary so that every pupil can go. The individual health and care plans and the education, health and care plans are comprehensive in describing what risk assessments and support need to be in place. Students in the sixth form have effective plans that provide additional guidance regarding

post-18 options until the age of 25, which is correct practice. Skilful teaching assistants support pupils with SEND.

Unsurprisingly in such a large school, there are several pupils with highly complex needs. Leaders have led the way in holding many of the multi-agency meetings needed to discuss and review these pupils. There have been successful applications for education, health and care plans for pupils as they go through the school so that they receive the right support. However, you are aware that there has not been a strategic overview of pupils who are attending school part time. This is because of an over-reliance on online reporting systems. A strategic analysis of the impact of actions was missing but you rectified this during the inspection. There is medical and local authority oversight for these pupils, so processes follow the correct guidance. The school is starting to use alternative provision. The communication with alternative provision has been exemplary.

When any pupil is missing from education, the correct forms and procedures are undertaken. You discourage parents from removing pupils for elective home education because of attendance issues. Equally, you acknowledge that elective home education is a parental right. Staff inform the local authority appropriately and there is good communication on this issue to make sure pupils are safe wherever they are being educated.

There is good communication with the local authority's designated safeguarding officer about staff and pupil issues. The DSL escalates some of the high-profile cases. Similarly, school leaders work closely with the police liaison officer. As a result, leaders share and resolve community issues when possible. The police liaison officer presents assemblies to pupils on relevant issues as well as attending parents' evenings. This allows parents to raise questions and concerns on a face-to-face basis.

A new leader of the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) was appointed last year. There has been an overhaul of the curriculum. Pupils and staff appreciate the changes. There is a programme of assemblies to complement the PSHE lessons. As yet, pupils' understanding of the British values of democracy and rule of law is weak. Equally, pupils are not taught explicitly about equality and diversity. Pupils learn about tolerance, respect and different faiths through religious education. Teaching is strong in religious education and pupils spoke of their enjoyment of the learning undertaken. Students in the sixth form receive good PSHE information. However, as with the main school, there is a lack of education on equality and diversity. Students are not prepared adequately for the various settings and places they will encounter and live in beyond school.

Careers guidance is effective in the main school and the sixth form.

Students receive a breadth of information on education, employment and training opportunities which satisfy the range of abilities. Sixth-form students have an effective tutorial programme which is an online reporting system. Sixth-form leaders have been less effective at tracking students' next steps when they leave the sixth form in the midst of a course or at the end of their education. Leaders telephone the students' home and send letters. If there is no response to these processes, contact is made with an independent careers advice service. So far, they have traced four students, with successful outcomes. However, there are still others for whom the destinations are unknown.

Current attendance is still below the national average and persistent absence is too high. There is an action plan to improve these areas, but leaders have not evaluated the actions or concentrated on where the greatest impact of these actions is happening. As a result, improvement is marginal. Staff are working with local primary schools to improve attendance when pupils are younger, and problems are not embedded. In the sixth form the attendance policy is also unclear. Good attendance depends on teachers, rather than a comprehensive and consistent use of policy.

External support

The school improvement partner has played a strategically important role in ensuring that safeguarding is effective and that pupil premium is spent wisely. There are links with local teaching school alliances, so best practice on safeguarding and behaviour management can be shared.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that leaders and governors hold a strategic view and relentlessly monitor the impact of their plans, policies and practice:
 - to improve the quality of education and attendance of the most vulnerable pupils in the school
 - to improve attendance overall and reduce persistent absence, including in the sixth form, with more urgency.
- Leaders of the sixth form should ensure that teachers embed diversity and equality in their teaching to re-enforce students' understanding of working and living in a wide range of communities

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

Yours sincerely

Kathy Maddocks
Her Majesty's Inspector