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Mrs Jennie Giovanelli
Acting Principal
Kingsthorpe College
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Dear Mrs Giovanelli

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Kingsthorpe College

Following my visit with Andrew Hunt, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 29 September 2016, 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 and aspects of the effectiveness of leadership and management (including governance) in the school.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements, including the school's safeguarding policy. Inspectors met with the chief executive officer of the Collaborative Academies Trust, the acting principal, senior leaders, pastoral leaders, subject leaders and members of staff. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and with the vice-chair of the governing body. Inspectors visited 11 lessons and observed an assembly. Inspectors met with pupils from across all years, both formally and informally, and observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime. Inspectors scrutinised documents relating to teaching and learning, behaviour, attendance and governance.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

Kingsthorpe College is larger than the average-sized secondary school, with 1,310 pupils on roll. The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic groups is above the national average, as is the proportion of those who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of those pupils who are disadvantaged is average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. However, the proportion of pupils who are supported by an education, health and care plan is average. The proportion of pupils who arrive at or leave the school during the academic year is below average. This academic year, 12 new staff started at the school. The principal is currently on long-term absence. There is an acting principal in place.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Senior leaders have taken effective action to ensure that the school has an open culture that promotes the safety and success of all of its pupils. Senior leaders have put into place strategies to ensure that all members of the community can communicate directly with them, particularly where they may have a concern. For example, senior leaders now hold weekly drop-in sessions where parents or staff may discuss any issues they may have relating to the school's provision. Staff told inspectors that they appreciate the transparent nature of this leadership.

Senior leaders have undertaken action to secure staff's well-being and to encourage teamwork. For example, they have introduced a weekly breakfast for subject and pastoral leaders, to encourage these colleagues to work more closely together. Senior leaders have also introduced 'Well-being Wednesday' to encourage staff to reflect on their own welfare. Staff told inspectors that they appreciated this focus on teamwork and senior leaders' attention to staff's well-being. They felt that these initiatives provided recognition for their own contribution to the school.

Senior leaders have maintained their high expectations for the quality of teaching at the school. They have introduced measures to ensure that staff reflect upon their classroom practice and consider new strategies to help pupils learn. These measures include introducing weekly teaching and learning meetings at which staff can share best practice. Senior leaders conduct regular visits to lessons to ensure that teaching meets their high expectations. They rightly recognise, however, that some teachers' use of tutor time is not sufficiently effective.

Senior leaders have maintained their high expectations in relation to the pupils' behaviour and conduct. Those pupils whom inspectors met said that behaviour is good. They said that teachers deal with occasions of pupils' poor behaviour quickly and effectively. Staff told the inspectors that the recent introduction of a detention that senior leaders run has reinforced the school's high expectations regarding pupils' behaviour.

Senior leaders have taken action to improve pupils' attendance at the school. They have employed an attendance officer who closely monitors the attendance of all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, including those who are in the care of the local authority. Senior leaders have also reviewed their procedures to ensure the increased attendance of those pupils who are regularly absent from school. Senior leaders, however, recognise that there is still work for the school to do to ensure that pupils' attendance is at least in line with national levels.

The work senior leaders undertake to keep pupils safe is thorough and robust. The designated safeguarding lead, ably supported by the team of safeguarding staff, is quick to take action where it is necessary to ensure that pupils are safe. This includes maintaining close contact with pupils' parents, and contacting local agencies where this is necessary. When dealing with local agencies, the designated safeguarding lead is tenacious in ensuring that the agency takes appropriate action to secure the safety and well-being of the school's pupils.

The designated safeguarding lead conducts a regular and thorough analysis of the nature of the safeguarding referrals that she receives. She is also aware of any issues within the local community that may affect pupils' safety. Where she identifies any emerging patterns or trends, she takes prompt and effective action to raise these concerns with senior leaders, all staff and governors. She also undertakes appropriate action to educate pupils about these issues, to ensure that they know how to stay safe.

Staff receive regular training on how to keep pupils safe. They receive annual safeguarding training, including training on preventing radicalisation and extremism. Staff also receive weekly safeguarding updates. These serve to embed the school's open culture and to remind staff that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Those staff with whom inspectors met were fully aware of the different types and signs of abuse. They understood the actions that they should take where they have concerns regarding a pupil's welfare, or where they have concerns relating to an adult's actions towards a child. The school's safeguarding records demonstrate that, where an adult makes a referral regarding a pupil's welfare, the safeguarding team takes timely and effective action.

Those pupils the inspectors met with said that they are happy at the school, and that they feel safe. They said that there are staff they can speak to if they have any concerns. They are confident that these staff would listen to their concerns and would take action. The pupils said that bullying at the school is rare. Where it may occur, they are confident that staff would deal with it quickly and effectively.

Governors are ambitious for the school. They provide effective support for senior leaders. They also provide appropriate levels of challenge. Governors undertake regular visits to the school to check the effectiveness of senior leaders' actions to ensure that pupils are safe, attend regularly and achieve well.

External support

The Collaborative Academies Trust provides effective support and challenge to senior leaders at the school. The trust has made appropriate appointments to the senior and extended leadership teams to ensure that there is the capacity to maintain and improve upon the school's current provision for its pupils. The trust is prepared to challenge leaders where their practice does not meet the trust's high expectations.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that all teachers use tutor time effectively to enable pupils to reflect upon their well-being and their personal development.
- Embed strategies to raise the attendance of all groups of pupils, so that attendance rates are at least in line with national levels.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Hollingsworth

Her Majesty's Inspector