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Mr Matthew McCluskey
Denewood Academy
Denewood Learning Centre
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Dear Mr McCluskey

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Denewood Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 25 May 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 and aspects of the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school (including governance).

Evidence

I scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. I met with the headteacher, the achievement manager, the attendance manager and a group of pupils. I spoke to three parents or carers and three alternative providers by telephone. In addition, I met with the chief executive officer of the Raleigh Learning Trust. I spoke to the local authority designated officer by telephone and also met with a representative of the local authority. I met with a group of staff and with the subject leader of personal, social, health education.

I scrutinised recruitment records of staff, pupils' personal education plans, risk assessments for pupils, service level agreements with alternative providers, minutes of management meetings, behaviour logs, records of physical restraints and attendance records. I also scrutinised an external review of safeguarding commissioned by the local authority.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

The school has had a significant increase in pupil numbers in the current year. At the start of the academic year the school had 63 pupils. At the time of this visit, the school has 134 pupils. All pupils have been permanently excluded from their previous schools.

The deputy headteacher has just completed a phased return to the school. The school has recently employed an attendance officer to support the work of the attendance manager. The school works with 22 alternative providers. The vast majority of pupils attend alternative providers.

Last month, the school became part of the Raleigh Learning Trust.

The headteacher promotes safeguarding well. The school works closely with several external agencies, including the youth offending team and social care, to try and keep pupils safe. Leaders keep detailed records of actions taken to safeguard pupils. At management meetings, all aspects of safeguarding, including behaviour and attendance, are discussed and actions agreed to respond to the concerns raised. These actions are shared quickly with the appropriate staff and external agencies, to help keep pupils safe. The leaders' swift response to concerns is appreciated by parents, staff and by alternative providers.

The school communicates all safeguarding concerns with the relevant alternative providers promptly. Each pupil has a risk assessment to try and reduce risks and keep them safe. These are shared with the alternative providers before the pupil is enrolled. The representatives of the alternative providers are very appreciative of the regular safeguarding updates they receive about individual pupils. Furthermore, they are also invited to multi-agency meetings so they are fully aware of the current needs of the pupils.

The school staff are very knowledgeable about how to respond to any safeguarding disclosures made by pupils. The staff receive training about safeguarding as part of their induction. They are trained to report all concerns. One member of staff reported how his induction taught him, 'No concern is too small to report.' Staff receive feedback from senior leaders about the actions they have taken following a disclosure. Safeguarding records include accounts of the actions taken by leaders once a concern has been raised. Actions are timely and often involve informing a range of agencies to secure the best support for pupils.

The staff have had recent training on child sexual exploitation. The school leaders

have been proactive to try and prevent pupils from being exploited. This has resulted in working with different agencies to try and keep pupils safe. If pupils make disclosures, the staff are vigilant and take the appropriate action to help keep pupils safe.

Personal, social and health education is an important part of the school's curriculum and focuses strongly on pupils' well-being. Pupils learn of the dangers of illegal substance misuse and of taking alcohol. Pupils are given scenarios to reflect on how they would react if they were offered drugs. This allows the staff to see how pupils are making their decisions and for staff to help inform the pupils to make the right decisions.

Pupils spoke positively about the education they receive to help them keep safe. Pupils learn about the potential dangers of child sexual exploitation, and are aware of not accepting gifts from strangers. One pupil said if you did accept gifts, 'You are in their debt.' As part of their sex and relationships education, pupils have learnt about the importance of consent. They have also learnt how to stay safe on the internet. Pupils know not to put anything inappropriate online as this could affect their future employment opportunities.

Pupils said they feel safe at school. They said behaviour was good and that teachers deal with any incidents of bullying quickly. They feel staff listen to them and act upon their concerns. Staff record all behavioural incidents and leaders discuss incidents of poor behaviour each week to try and prevent misbehaviour in the future.

The staff feel that behaviour has improved greatly over time. The school has clear boundaries which the pupils have learned to respect. However, some of the alternative providers do not have the same rules and codes of conduct which can cause difficulty when pupils return to Denewood to study. For example, pupils at the school do not leave the site at lunchtime, yet can do when attending some alternative providers.

In addition, there is not a consistent approach between the school and alternative providers over the procedures they implement if a pupil absconds. This can lead to a delay in contacting the most appropriate people to try and keep a pupil safe.

Leaders are aware of these issues, but have not been fully successful to ensure that all the alternative providers have the same rules and expectations as the school. I have asked you to address this again with the alternative providers, and I have raised this as a concern with the representative from the local authority.

The number of incidents that require the staff to use physical restraint has remained constant through the academic year. The behaviour policy makes it clear that the use of physical restraint is of last resort. Staff are trained annually on how to safely restrain a pupil. The school keeps detailed records of how incidents have started

and the actions of staff. After each incident involving physical restraint, a member of staff talks with the pupil concerned. However, the staff do not record the pupils' views and, therefore, leaders cannot fully analyse everyone's view and use the findings to try and reduce the number of incidents over time.

Parents are highly complementary about the care provided by staff for their children. They are particularly pleased with the frequent communication from school staff about the progress their child is making. One parent was very positive about the help they have received to integrate their child back into a new mainstream setting.

The school tracks the pupils' attendance closely. Staff know where each pupil should be at any point in the school day. If a pupil is absent, the alternative providers inform the school so school staff too can follow-up the reasons why, as well as the alternative providers. The administration team records each text and message sent to the parents about a pupil's attendance. However, these records are not linked to the school's main safeguarding records for each pupil to ensure all actions are recorded in one place and actions taken are known to all leaders quickly.

Recently, the attendance manager has increased the number of face-to face meetings with pupils and their parents or carers, to help resolve the issue of poor attendance. More penalty notices have also been issued to parents whose children have been persistently absent from school. The latest attendance figures show a marked increase in attendance over the school year compared to the same time in the last academic year. In addition, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has also fallen.

External support

The chief executive officer of the Raleigh Learning Trust scrutinises the actions taken by leaders in relation to safeguarding matters. He visits the school each week and attends the leaders' management meetings. He challenges the school leaders to ensure they have taken the most appropriate action to safeguard pupils. In addition, he provides advice and support for leaders to seek additional support for pupils if required. The trust is currently training a board member on all aspects of safeguarding to further strengthen the trust's scrutiny.

The local authority adviser visits the school each half term to check on the progress of the pupils. She knows the school well. The local authority has increased the amount of resources provided to the school following the large increase in the number of pupils. The local authority commissioned an external review of safeguarding in the autumn term. Leaders have addressed all the recommended actions. The headteacher regularly attends safeguarding meetings hosted by the local authority, to keep up to date with the latest guidance.

The school has used effectively resources from the local authority to support its

personal, social and health education. Pupils are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe.

Priorities for further improvement:

- leaders should ensure that the service level agreement between the school and alternative providers has clear expectations for pupils' behaviour and conduct for when they attend alternative providers and that it is adhered to
- leaders should ensure that there are consistent procedures in place at every alternative provider if a pupil absconds
- ensure that the physical restraint records include the views of the pupils concerned, so all viewpoints can be analysed to help reduce the frequency of incidents of physical restraint
- ensure the records for monitoring attendance are linked to the school's safeguarding records to ensure information is shared easily.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Finch

Her Majesty's Inspector