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8 March 2017

Ms Angela Drayton
Headteacher
St Dominic's School
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Dear Ms Drayton

No formal designation monitoring inspection of St Dominic's School

Following my visit with Jenny Boyd, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 7 February 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 at the school.

Evidence

We scrutinised the single central record and an extensive range of documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements, including concerns staff have reported and records of pupils' behaviour. We met with you, the team of designated safeguarding leads, the chair and the vice-chair of the governing body and leaders with responsibility for recording and analysing behaviour incidents. We observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, at break- and lunchtime, during an evacuation in response to a burglar alarm, and around the school. We observed a 'pupil voice' meeting and spoke to the group of pupils after the meeting. Records of the governing body's work were scrutinised. We took account of complaints raised by parents and reviewed the way in which the school responds to concerns raised by parents.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

There are currently 88 pupils at the school. All pupils at the school have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. This inspection took place at the same time as the social care inspection of the residential provision. This inspection was unannounced and took place on one day. This school is currently one of three schools within the Radius Trust.

You, leaders, staff and governors place a high priority on keeping pupils safe. As a result, the school's arrangements to safeguard pupils are effective. The policies and procedures are clear and detailed, and meet requirements. However, the practice on the ground is more effective and rigorous than the policy suggests. Checks on staff, governors and regular visitors are thorough. Staff are trained well in all aspects of safeguarding, including in relation to the risks of radicalisation and extremism, and they fulfil their responsibilities effectively by reporting any concerns immediately and in appropriate detail to the designated safeguarding team. All recorded incidents and concerns are followed up immediately by the relevant designated safeguarding lead. The minutes of weekly safeguarding meetings demonstrate that leaders check that appropriate action has been taken and concerns are not closed until they are resolved. When necessary, external agencies are informed so that appropriate action can be taken.

The behaviour in lessons and around the school is very calm and controlled. Even when situations are unexpected, such as evacuating the building in response to a burglar alarm, pupils move around the site sensibly and appropriately. During the evacuation, inspectors observed one pupil refusing to meet at the agreed place. A staff member quickly identified this and spoke calmly and quietly to the pupil, encouraging him to move to the agreed place, which he did. Staff demonstrate effective de-escalation techniques, and take steps to ensure that pupils do not encounter situations that may cause them stress and result in challenging behaviour.

Pupils say that they feel happy and safe at the school. Regular 'pupil voice' meetings enable them to share their thoughts and concerns, and have a say in improving the school. Pupils say that they feel listened to and can talk to staff if they are worried. For example, they make suggestions about meals they would like and resources they need. Pupils also tell leaders if they are worried about any aspect of the site, for example, loose paving or damage to property. Leaders are quick to respond to their concerns and actions are reviewed at each meeting. Pupils recognise the ways in which staff 'go above and beyond' their duties. They have recently suggested adapting positive feedback slips, which are currently used to praise pupils, to show their appreciation of staff.

Behaviour incidents are recorded appropriately. Leaders analyse the types of incidents effectively to monitor whether behaviour is improving and take action if this is not the case. However, leaders' analysis of why and when the behaviours occur is not as detailed as it could be, so occasionally, opportunities are lost to understand pupils' triggers better. Physical restraint training is rigorous and all restraints are recorded appropriately and in line with requirements.

Leaders involve parents and seek their views in a range of ways, including through the parent forum and parent voice group. The weekly newsletter ensures that parents are aware of forthcoming events. It also provides useful information about the way pupils might respond to particular situations, and makes suggestions as to how parents can support their children's learning and development at home. Leaders and governors take parents' concerns very seriously. They investigate incidents in detail, consulting with all the relevant staff to ensure that the information they have is correct. They comply with the requirements of the complaints policy and respond within the relevant deadlines. However, the way in which complaints are recorded and documentation is filed does not reflect the detail and rigour of the process and response.

Governors have a good understanding of the school and are involved appropriately in monitoring safeguarding and behaviour. They receive detailed information from leaders and carry out their own checks to see the processes and systems in action. Governors are appropriately trained and take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously.

External support

Leaders and governors make good use of external support. They engage a safeguarding adviser to carry out training, provide up-to-date information and review the safeguarding systems and their effectiveness within the school. Governors have recently undertaken an external review of governance and this is helping to ensure that they are focusing on the right priorities for monitoring and improvement.

Priorities for further improvement

- Analyse available information to identify what further improvements can be made.
- Sharpen the recording and storage of complaints information so it can be accessed easily when needed.
- Update policies to reflect the good current practice.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the Radius Trust and the director of children's services for Surrey. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Louise Adams

Her Majesty's Inspector