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Melissa Elve-Williams
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Dear Ms Elve-Williams

No formal designation inspection of Park Campus Academy

Following my visit with Joanna Jones, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 3 and 4 November 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and the time you took to discuss your school.

This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for no formal designation (NFD) inspections. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector wished to determine the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the school as concerns had been raised with Ofsted about aspects of the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school, and safeguarding.

We do not give graded judgements on NFD inspections. However, if we find some evidence that overall standards may be declining, but where no serious concerns have been identified, then the next inspection will normally be a section 5 inspection and will be brought forward. If we have serious concerns, we will deem the NFD inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

Evidence

We scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We met with you and other senior leaders, a group of staff, groups of pupils and representatives of the trust. We held telephone conversations with the lead governor for safeguarding, headteachers from schools who have received former pupils back into mainstream schools, and the designated officer for safeguarding. We scrutinised records and documents related to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance,

and the personal, social, health and economic education of pupils. We also looked at records of meetings of the academy council, which provides local governance and has delegated responsibility for safeguarding. We met with the education welfare officer attached to the school and a safer schools police officer who works each week with pupils in the school. We visited lessons and spoke with pupils at informal times in the school day.

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

Safeguarding is effective

Context

Park Campus Academy provides an alternative education for pupils aged 11 to 16 who have been excluded or are out of mainstream education for other reasons. At the time of the inspection, there were 21 pupils on roll, though the school has the capacity to admit up to 100 pupils. None of these pupils have an education, health and care plan. The school also offers temporary places for pupils attending mainstream schools who are at risk of permanent exclusion, though none of these places were in use at the time of the inspection. The headteacher has had joint responsibility for leadership of this school and another school in the trust since September 2021. She splits her time evenly between the two schools.

Main Findings

Leaders and governors make sure that pupils who have been excluded from mainstream school understand the expectations they have of them. Frequent discussions between staff enable information to be shared and concerns identified at an early stage. There is a strong sense of collaboration among staff which is visible to pupils and gives them confidence to disclose their concerns. Weekly meetings are used by staff to share concerns or successes related to pupils. This helps to ensure a mutual understanding and consistent approach to pupils' care are maintained.

Leaders and governors ensure that the required checks on the suitability of staff are made and recorded in a systematic way. Record-keeping is typically managed well and used by leaders to decide on actions to take when risks to pupils are identified. For example, records of when staff have needed to restrain pupils are thorough and include notes about how pupils reacted and responded to this. However, there is variability in how well records of the school's work to safeguard pupils known to social services are organised. All of the necessary information is retained and leaders make sure the school is routinely represented at child protection meetings. However, records are not organised coherently and this makes it unnecessarily hard for staff to tell the story of how pupils known to social services are being helped to stay safe.

The pupils we spoke with typically feel safe in school. They often feel that staff in this school better understand how to meet their needs than when they were struggling in

mainstream education. The girls we spoke to told us there is respect between boys and girls. Pupils were not concerned that any parts of the school are less safe than others. They appreciate the supervision provided by staff across the school. Pupils were generally positive about how staff tackle bullying and other poor behaviour, and understand the sanctions and rewards systems in place. They value the weekly feedback from staff on positive aspects of their behaviour.

Pupils can remember the work they have done to learn how to stay safe. For example, they appreciate the work that the school nurse has done to support them in making healthy choices. Leaders ensure the curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn how to develop personal safety strategies, understand diversity, prejudice and discrimination, and how to deal with everyday experiences of relationships. Sex education, drugs education and personal finance are some of the ways pupils learn to make positive choices in their lives. We saw examples of how lessons take account of the context in which many pupils live and which explore issues which may put them at risk, such as knife crime, and drug and gang culture.

Leaders keep detailed and well-organised records of staff training. They ensure that all staff are updated with the most recent changes to statutory safeguarding guidance. Staff can recall particular aspects of their training which they find invaluable in offering support and identifying risks to pupils.

The trust councillors who act as local governors challenge leaders about matters relating to safeguarding and follow up actions in subsequent meetings. Governors recognise that more focus could be placed on their oversight of the curriculum related to strengthening pupils' resilience to risk.

Leaders keep separate records of poor behaviour which includes sexualised language or actions. They use these to decide on how to prevent instances reoccurring. Examples seen show that pupils who exhibit these behaviours are repeatedly offered specialist support to help them avoid behaving this way in the future.

Leaders keep a detailed record of pupils' attendance and take action when it is discovered that a child is at risk of going missing from education. Leaders are tenacious in promoting the best attendance possible for pupils, particularly when their previous attendance has been a cause for concern.

Leaders make sure that schools receiving pupils back into mainstream have the information they need to help make these transitions successful. They follow up on how well pupils are doing after their return, including in the first term of post-16 placements.

Systems are in place to filter inappropriate content from internet services used in school, including when devices are loaned for use by pupils at home for remote education. Staff monitor attempts by pupils to override these restrictions and keep a close eye on how pupils communicate with one another using chat functions and email.

Additional support

Representatives of the Parallel Learning Trust understand the local context of the school and know the predominant risks which pupils may encounter in their lives outside of school. They ensure members of the academy council who act as governors have the necessary training and structure to challenge and support leaders in their work to keep pupils safe. The education welfare officer attached to the school knows the local area well and supports the school in building effective communication with parents. The safer schools police officer is on site frequently and helps promote a positive image of policing with pupils who may be at risk of becoming known to the criminal justice system. He finds out about themes in the behaviour of pupils and offers support in school to help this improve.

Priorities for further improvement

- Leaders should tackle the variability in the organisation of child protection information to ensure a full and accurate picture of a pupil's needs is readily apparent, particularly when a pupil is known to social services.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of the Parallel Learning Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lambeth. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Wright
Her Majesty's Inspector