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Mr Chris Fairbairn
The Totteridge Academy
Barnet Lane
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Dear Mr Fairbairn

No formal designation monitoring inspection of The Totteridge Academy

Following my visit with Gerard Strong, Ofsted Inspector, to your school 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 the way the school manages pupils' behaviour.

Evidence

Inspectors considered evidence that included:

- discussions with pupils and staff
- meetings with school leaders, the lead safeguarding officer for United Learning Trust, the chair of the local governing board and the deputy director of academies for the United Learning Trust
- telephone conversations with the local authority designated officer and the Barnet exclusions officer
- observations of pupils' behaviour during break- and lunchtimes and lesson times
- observations of staff's management of behaviour
- scrutiny of the school's arrangements to safeguard pupils, including pre-employment checks made on staff, the single central record and partnerships with external agencies
- documentary evidence, including policies, procedures and protocols for keeping children safe and managing their behaviour.

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

The school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Context

The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. There is a very small number of students completing their 16 to 19 study programmes, with no students currently in Year 12. A larger than average proportion of pupils are boys. A far higher than average proportion of pupils come from disadvantaged backgrounds and a larger proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities than is typical of secondary schools in England. A large number of pupils join the school mid-year and a small number attend alternative provision. The principal joined the school substantively in September 2016 alongside the majority of the senior leadership team. Almost one quarter of current staff have joined the school since September 2016. In November 2016, the school formally joined the United Learning Trust, which assumed governance responsibility from the predecessor school's governing body at that time.

Inspection findings

Leaders and those responsible for governance have rightly placed safeguarding at the centre of their plans to improve the school. Upon their arrival, leaders quickly identified priority areas related to the school's safeguarding arrangements. Prompt and effective action has improved the school's arrangements to safeguard pupils, including making changes to staffing where necessary. Leaders' actions are informed by robust monitoring and support from the trust.

Pupils and staff confidently report concerns and queries to leaders. Those members of staff and pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they trust leaders to do something about their concerns. When the school joined the trust, the process of rewriting key welfare-related policies supported leaders to refine school-wide procedures. These procedures enable staff to know how to report concerns about a pupil's welfare and to whom they should direct their concerns. In addition to the school's annual training on safeguarding, the 'Prevent' duty and e-safety, further staff training has been planned to ensure that they are up to date with any changes to legislation and statutory guidance.

Leaders are quick to identify risks and respond promptly to internal and external scrutiny of their work. This includes seeking pupils' views through online surveys that are currently under way. Consequently, school leaders have a very clear and accurate view of the strengths and remaining areas for improvement concerning pupils' welfare.

Leaders are tenacious in their follow-up of referrals to external agencies and work

effectively with the local authority, so that pupils' well-being remains the priority even when other issues arise. Pupils, staff and external agencies spoken to by inspectors all reiterated the view that leaders have significantly improved the school's arrangements for safeguarding since joining the school.

The trust is stringent in holding leaders to account for their work, particularly around pupils' welfare and behaviour. The security of the school's premises was a key initial priority that was promptly improved. Follow-up actions are now being undertaken to develop the school's site security further, with planned building work scheduled to commence this summer. Staff are all subject to the required pre-employment checks. The single central record is accurate and reflects the latest statutory guidance. Checks on the school's compliance with health and safety, fire and medical requirements have resulted in these aspects being made secure. The school's work with the local authority means that leaders know pupils' destinations when leaving this school. Leaders make checks on pupils who are excluded from school to ensure that they are safe and receiving education. Leaders ensure that the small number of pupils who attend off-site provision are safe, attend well and make progress in their learning.

Attendance overall has been slightly lower than average over the past three years. Currently, attendance remains lower than leaders aim for, particularly in Years 10 and 11, but persistent absence has improved markedly. This is partly because of the effective work to improve the attendance of pupils who join the school mid-year with very low attendance. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities remains particularly low. Recent changes to the leadership of the school's inclusion provision, including the appointment of a new special educational needs coordinator who has yet to start, have hindered some of the work to improve standards for those pupils. Currently, staff are effective in following up absences and improving pupils' attitudes to attending school, but further work remains to be done to ensure that approaches take into account pupils' individual needs, so that absence improves for all groups of pupils.

The curriculum provides opportunities to help pupils learn about risks and keeping themselves healthy and safe. Pupils are encouraged to collaborate, compete and take part in activities that develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills. Pupils displayed healthy lifestyle traits during the inspection by eating nutritious food at lunchtime, and the majority engaged in sport or other activities throughout the day. However, activities and events are not consistently effective in developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of keeping themselves safe, particularly outside school.

Inspectors found that the school's e-safety work was particularly effective and pupils could recall this with ease. Older pupils were able to reflect upon other

sessions held in the past, for example talks on drugs and workshops on respect. Only a few pupils spoken to could confidently recall the purpose of recent external speakers' visits more recently though. Similarly, younger pupils were inconsistent in their recollection of talks from senior leaders, including topics such as radicalisation and equality, for example.

Prior to the leadership team's arrival, behaviour had declined, according to the school's information and pupils' and staff's testimony to inspectors. Inconsistent behaviour management, unclear expectations and ineffective procedures were among the issues reported to inspectors. The standard of pupils' behaviour is now better because pupils understand what is expected of them and staff are better at managing instances of poor behaviour in lessons and at social times. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at break- and lunchtimes and lesson times and found that typically, behaviour was in line with leaders' high expectations.

Staff on duty supervise pupils well during social times. Pupils play and interact with one another in a typically friendly and respectful way. Pupils mix well when playing games at social times and are confident when speaking with one another and adults. Some instances of poor language were heard during the inspection, but this was not common. Boisterous behaviour was rare and normally picked up by staff. Pupils reported that incidents that may have made them feel unsafe at social times in the past have now become infrequent. During lessons, behaviour was observed to be supporting learning and managed well by staff overall. Few instances of poor or off-task behaviour were observed, reflecting the improvements noted in the school's information over time. However, some staff were not as effective in noticing and responding to infringements to the school's rules. In some instances, pupils were not reminded of the school's expectations as expected, for example in the presentation of their uniform, when entering a classroom and when moving between lessons.

Overall, improvements in behaviour reflect the school's new behaviour policy that promotes positive behaviours and sets clear thresholds for managing behaviour. The new rewards system encourages pupils to aspire to better attendance and behaviour, while the internal isolation room is an increasingly effective alternative to exclusion. Despite an initial spike in exclusions, due to leaders' heightened expectations, behaviour is steadily improving. Pupils and staff were consistent in their feedback to inspectors that behaviour is much better than in the past and that bullying is rare because of the changes made since September. Where instances of poor behaviour or bullying do occur, most staff are better at dealing with these consistently well than was formerly the case.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the current standards of behaviour in the school. However, leaders are only now establishing a precise view of whether any trends exist that may help evaluate their current procedures and inform their

subsequent plans. For example, the school's records show that some pupils have received the same sanction for the same or similar infringements over time, but there is not a clear plan in place to address this. In other cases, pupils' behaviour improves significantly because of the effective work now undertaken to address particular pupils' needs. The trust's recent review of the school's work is accurate in identifying that some strengths in behaviour management are still too dependent upon individuals' approaches rather than new systems being embedded across the school. In some cases, further training is required to ensure that procedures are highly effective in addressing the causes of poor behaviour and that all staff assume the same level of responsibility for managing behaviour.

Priorities for further improvement

- Further improve pupils' behaviour by:
 - refining leaders' analysis and evaluation of school systems and behaviour information to precisely inform further developments
 - ensuring that all staff consistently uphold leaders' high expectations, so that pupils' behaviour is good or better throughout the day and consistently demonstrates the school's values.
- Develop the curriculum, so that pupils in all year groups receive effective opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills they need to support their welfare and keep themselves safe.

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

Yours sincerely

Matt Tiplin

Her Majesty's Inspector