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5 July 2021

Jim Smith
Headteacher
Meden School
Burns Lane
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Nottinghamshire
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Dear Mr Smith

No formal designation inspection of Meden School

Following my inspection with Deborah Mosley, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 15 June 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the findings.

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 of Education, Children's Services and Skills wished to determine the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements as concerns had been raised with Ofsted.

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 to be a section 5 inspection immediately.

Evidence

We met with a number of the school's leaders, including the designated leader for safeguarding. We met with pastoral leaders and the coordinator for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). We spoke to pupils in lessons and during social time. I met with the chair of the local academy committee. I also met with two representatives from the Nova Education Trust, including the executive headteacher.

We scrutinised the single central record and the school's procedures for ensuring the suitability of staff to work with children. We explored a range of other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We evaluated the effectiveness of leaders' curriculum planning for pupils' personal development in helping them to understand how to keep themselves safe.

I considered a small number of parents' and carers' views that were emailed to the school on the day of the inspection. I also contacted a representative from the local authority by telephone.

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

Safeguarding is effective

Context

The Meden School is a smaller-than-average-sized secondary school catering for 910 pupils aged 11 to 18. The proportion of pupils with SEND is in line with the national average. Similarly, the proportion of pupils with education, health and care plans is below that seen nationally. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. A very small number of pupils attend alternative off-site provision at the Samworth Academy, Queen Elizabeth School, First Class Tailored Solutions and the CAST Angling Project.

The current headteacher has been in post since November 2019. He was joined by the executive headteacher at this time. A new senior designated leader for safeguarding was appointed in August 2020. The member of staff appointed to this role also has oversight of pupils' behaviour and attitudes, and is also the designated teacher for children looked after.

Main findings

Leaders and governors have ensured that the school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have strengthened their oversight of these arrangements. They are swiftly establishing a culture of vigilance.

Leaders take appropriate action when safeguarding concerns are raised. They refer concerns to the appropriate authorities and seek support from external agencies. The designated leader for safeguarding ensures that pastoral staff are tenacious in following up concerns so that pupils get the support they need. Leaders have put in place risk assessments to support vulnerable pupils. These are implemented well and reviewed regularly.

New systems and procedures have been implemented since the start of the school year. Staff have received updated training. They recognise their responsibilities to safeguard all pupils and to support their well-being. Staff know how to identify and report concerns.

The introduction of the trust's safeguarding app has helped leaders to strengthen the quality of record-keeping. However, there remains some inconsistency in the amount of detail recorded by staff. Leaders are aware of this and are taking appropriate action to ensure that all communication is detailed and in the appropriate form.

Most pupils told us that they feel safe in school. They know who they can speak to if they have any worries or concerns. Pupils recognise the responsibilities of the designated safeguarding leader. Instances of peer-on-peer abuse, including bullying and sexual harassment, are taken seriously. Staff provide support for victims and perpetrators. A small number of pupils said that they do not report concerns about harmful sexual behaviour or name-calling. Leaders recognise the importance of establishing a culture of zero tolerance and are working towards this.

Leaders use their knowledge about safeguarding concerns to inform the curriculum for personal development and well-being. Pupils have learned about personal safety and well-being from visiting speakers and assemblies.

Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe. For example, they learn about healthy relationships, consent, sexual abuse and the law. Leaders are currently redeveloping the curriculum for relationships, sex and health education. They recognise the importance of meeting all aspects of government's guidance. Checking of curriculum planning and delivery by leaders are at an early stage of development.

The arrangements for monitoring pupils' attendance are effective. Staff make daily checks, including for pupils attending alternative off-site provision. They are alert to the pupils' absences, particularly those who are vulnerable. Staff follow up all absences and check that those pupils away for longer periods of time are safe and well.

Children looked after are a high priority for the school. These pupils are well cared for. The close monitoring and support they receive has helped almost all these pupils to enjoy full attendance at school.

Leaders, including governors, are trained in safer recruitment. They are thorough in checking the suitability of all adults who work with pupils. These checks meet all statutory requirements. Governors and trustees check that this work is carried out correctly.

Priorities for further improvement

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should further improve arrangements for safeguarding by ensuring that:
 - staff receive training in how to record safeguarding concerns in the appropriate form and in consistent detail
 - they carefully plan, implement and monitor the curriculum for relationships, sex and health education, so that all pupils receive high-quality teaching in this area.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Stevens
Her Majesty's Inspector