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12 July 2018

Mr Martin Ovenden
Principal
Cecil Jones Academy
Eastern Avenue
Southend-on-Sea
Essex
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Dear Mr Ovenden

No formal designation inspection of Cecil Jones Academy

Following my visit with Caroline Pardy, Ofsted Inspector, to your academy on 3 July 2018, 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 academy.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. Inspectors met with you, other leaders, the chief executive officer of the trust, groups of pupils, staff, and either met or spoke via telephone with members of the rapid improvement board (RIB).

Inspectors also looked at a range of documentation provided by leaders, including the minutes from the rapid improvement board. Inspectors visited lessons to observe pupils' behaviour, and observed their conduct on arrival, and during break and lunchtime.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

The school is an average-sized 11 to 18 academy serving the town of Southend and its surrounding areas. It opened as an academy in September 2015 under the sponsorship of the Legra Academy Trust. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is above the national average, and while most pupils are White British, about a quarter of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average, as are pupils who have an education, health and care plan. When the school was last inspected in December 2017, it was judged to be inadequate, and safeguarding was found to be ineffective. Since then, the local governing body has been replaced with a RIB.

Leaders, members of the RIB and staff know and understand their safeguarding responsibilities. The designated safeguarding lead oversees a team of three staff, all trained to designated safeguarding lead level. All staff have received additional child protection training since the last inspection. The single central record is well maintained and all of the statutory safeguarding checks are undertaken and recorded. A check of staff application forms showed that there were no unexplained gaps in employment histories. Procedures for safeguarding are regularly reviewed by the principal, the designated safeguarding lead, and the member of the rapid improvement board responsible for safeguarding.

During the visit, I checked your processes for logging issues raised by staff and sampled some case files of safeguarding incidents. There have been about 300 submissions from staff since December, and staff now use this information more judiciously to protect the school's most vulnerable pupils. The safeguarding files are orderly, the information is securely stored, and all contain a comprehensive chronology. The contents include the reasons for the referral, actions taken, meetings attended, any other relevant information, including wider agency involvement. The check lists now add an additional layer of quality assurance. The records show that staff are now being more vigilant, and they are displaying a tenacity whereby they look beyond the first answer given. Records show that staff question further, seek advice, and make referrals to social care if they still have doubts. These actions to safeguard pupils are carried out quickly, and clear records evidence the subsequent checks made on pupils' welfare.

The member of the RIB responsible for safeguarding has been fully involved in amending the layout of forms so that they better cover concerns about particular children. Alongside this, more rigorous processes have been introduced to ensure that the school does not miss key issues among the large number of issues raised by staff. Of these issues, only a very small proportion require a referral to the local safeguarding board, and the nominated governor realises that there is scope to reduce this workload without undermining the school's safeguarding systems. For example, continuing to build closer links with other agencies and the community

allows the school to collect information from many different sources, and not to be over-reliant on the school's forms. These improvements, and the increased focus on follow-up activities to check pupils' welfare, enable leaders to ensure that vulnerable pupils have the proper support in place to keep them safe.

You have reviewed your pastoral system, and there is now an increased focus on promoting positive behaviour. Pupils feel there is now an improved mixture of sanctions and rewards to manage behaviour, and when staff apply your system consistently, it works well. Pupils say that behaviour has improved and they notice the difference the new systems have made. As one pupil said, 'This is a good school that was spoiled by a small but vocal minority.' You acknowledge that not all staff manage pupils' behaviour as well as you would like, and this means that there are still inconsistencies. However, your records show that so far this year there have been significant reductions in fixed-term exclusions and in the number of referrals to the internal exclusion unit.

In most classes, pupils behave appropriately; they listen, collaborate well, and concentrate hard. However, we also saw some pupils display poor attitudes towards learning in some lessons. This includes not listening to teachers' instructions, not concentrating, and engaging in idle chatter. This mirrored some pupils' views of learning, as one remarked that 'some pupils talk more than they work'. These attitudes do not jeopardise pupils' safety, but they can disrupt the learning of others because staff in these lessons do not challenge behaviour well enough.

Inspection evidence shows that there has been an increase in the number of reported incidents of bullying. You explained that this was due to your new systems being more accurate and staff being more vigilant. Records show that bullying incidents are investigated thoroughly and all actions, including follow-up measures, are well documented. Pupils confirm that when bullying does occur, staff are readily available and address issues quickly. All pupils spoken to during the inspection said that they feel safe in school, and they are taught how to stay safe through assemblies and their personal, social, health and education lessons.

You continue to work with parents to improve pupils' attendance. Part of your strategy involves highlighting the link between high attendance and increased achievement. Assemblies focus on the importance of attending well, with inter-college competitions a strong feature. However, attendance is still below the national average and persistent absence is still too high. You will be adopting a two-week half-term break next year to discourage parents from taking holidays in term time. However, you realise that this needs to be an area for continued focus.

Your records show that not all parents follow the school's complaints procedure when they have matters to address. This can mean that you are sometimes unable to deal with concerns as quickly as you would like. However, when issues do come to your attention, they are taken seriously, acted on quickly, thoroughly investigated, and evidenced by comprehensive and detailed notes. You know the

importance of building links with parents and the community and have organised extra events for parents to air their views. However, you know that these are not that well attended. You highlight the successes you have had when dealing with parents informally, and you know that some parents still need more guidance on how to voice their concerns to ensure a speedy resolution.

External support

All the members of the RIB oversee a key area of school improvement. Members are well informed and bring a range of valuable experience and essential skills to their roles. Regular reports are produced for the board so that they can accurately track improvements over time. Board members have acted quickly and effectively in response to the concerns raised in the previous inspection report. Where practice has not been good enough, they have taken appropriate action. Monitoring records highlight the improving trends in behaviour and the effectiveness of safeguarding.

Priorities for further improvement

- Reduce persistent absence and raise overall attendance by implementing fully your action plan, and by monitoring the impact of those actions to ensure that they lead to significant improvement.
- Use your information gained from regular monitoring and evaluation to ensure greater consistency in pupils' behaviour for learning, and to illustrate the impact you and your leaders are having in securing improvements.
- Provide further guidance to parents about the school's complaints procedure and what they should do in the first instance if they have concerns.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the RIB, the chief executive officer of the academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Southend-on-Sea. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Randall
Her Majesty's Inspector