

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
www.ofsted.gov.uk



30 November 2015

Dr Philip Smith  
Associate Executive Principal  
Outwood Academy Valley  
Valley Road  
Worksop  
Nottinghamshire  
S81 7EN

Dear Philip Smith

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Outwood Academy Valley**

Following my visit with Deirdre Duggan, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 17 November 2015, 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**

During the inspection, we scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We met with the academy's Associate Executive Principal, as well as the regional Chief Executive Officer and the Academy Principal and Chief Executive of the Outwood Grange Academies Trust. We also met with other senior leaders, groups of pupils across all year groups, members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and members of staff. We took into account the views of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. We also took into account the results of parental surveys conducted by the academy and spoke to some parents at the beginning of the school day. We observed pupil behaviour at the beginning and end of the school day as well as during lessons and at breaktime and lunchtime. We took these opportunities to speak with pupils informally. I also spoke with a member of staff from an alternative provider, Good Apple, which the academy engages to enable pupils, where appropriate, to complete training away from the academy site.

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

The academy's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

## **Context**

The academy is much larger than the average-sized secondary school. It has a joint sixth form, shared with the Outwood Academy Portland. An average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, and a similar proportion speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is average. Pupil premium is additional government funding provided for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority. Staffing at the academy is stable.

## **Main findings**

Leaders, managers and all staff take their responsibility to ensure pupils are safe very seriously. Policies relating to safeguarding fully meet requirements. The academy employs robust procedures for checking the suitability of staff before they are appointed. All leaders and governors involved in staff recruitment have received training relating to safer recruitment. All staff are regularly trained in safeguarding, including radicalisation and extremism. As a consequence, all staff, including those new to the academy, understand their role in keeping all pupils safe and know how to report any concerns they may have concerning pupils' welfare and adults' conduct.

The academy works closely with a wide range of local agencies in order to support its pupils. Where they have concerns about a child's welfare, senior leaders make timely referrals to local agencies. They are tenacious in following up their concerns, where they feel that the local agency's response is too slow. Senior leaders also closely monitor those pupils about whom teachers or parents have expressed a concern relating to their welfare. Senior leaders hold weekly meetings with learning managers to discuss in detail the progress of these pupils. The academy staff offer close support to these pupils and ensure that there is regular contact with parents. As a consequence, senior leaders and learning managers have a precise view of the welfare of pupils who are experiencing difficulties, and are able to identify quickly any further support that is required.

Senior leaders and governors seek parents' views relating to the academy's provision and its procedures for keeping its pupils safe. The academy consults parents through conducting their own parental surveys and by holding information evenings. The academy listens to parents and takes action where concerns are raised. For example, a concern raised regarding the length of time it could take for parents to

contact the academy's main office by telephone saw the academy revise its procedures to ensure that parents' calls were answered more promptly. As a consequence of this prompt action, parents are now able to speak with members of staff more quickly.

Senior leaders regularly monitor pupils' attendance at the academy and work closely to support those pupils who are regularly absent from the academy, to encourage them to attend. As a consequence, overall attendance at the academy continues to improve, while the proportion of those pupils who are regularly absent from the academy is reducing.

Senior leaders closely monitor pupil behaviour, keep comprehensive bullying logs and address issues when they emerge. As a consequence, the number of incidents of bullying is low and reducing. Any incidents of prejudiced bullying is dealt with firmly and effectively. The academy is aware of local issues which may impact upon pupils' well-being. As a consequence, the academy is able to take prompt action to respond to emerging issues and support pupils where appropriate.

The academy has worked hard to ensure that pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. The academy's expectations relating to pupils' conduct are clear and well understood by pupils. The consequence system, which the academy uses to ensure pupils behave appropriately in lessons and around the academy site, provides pupils with opportunities to reflect upon and change their own behaviour. Corridors contain vibrant displays, which provide inspirational messages, the purpose of which is to encourage pupils to engage with their learning and to consider their behaviour. Staff, including senior leaders, are present before the school day, during pupils' social time and at the end of the school day. As a result, most pupils behave well and move calmly around the academy site between lessons and during social time, respecting each other and staff. Most pupils met by inspectors both formally and informally commented positively about relationships between pupils and with staff, although some feel that not all teachers apply the behaviour policy consistently.

While there are some parents who are unhappy with aspects of the academy's behaviour policy, evidence seen by inspectors shows that many parents appreciate the care and support shown to their children by academy staff. Many parents have taken the trouble to write in to thank the academy for their actions. Senior leaders and learning managers work hard to support pupils who experience difficulties in meeting the academy's high expectations relating to pupil conduct and behaviour, particularly those pupils who are excluded. Many of these pupils make good progress as a result of the support they receive, including taking on positions of responsibility within the pupil community. As a consequence, the number of exclusions are beginning to reduce and the proportion of pupils who are excluded more than once is low when compared with the proportion of pupils who receive exclusions. The academy also takes a number of pupils during the academic year who have

experienced difficulties in other schools. These pupils are closely monitored and effectively supported by the academy. Senior leaders also regularly monitor the attendance, progress and welfare of any pupils who attend training at places away from the academy.

All groups of pupils seen by inspectors both formally and informally said they felt safe at the academy. A large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the academy's own parental survey agree that their children feel safe. Pupils know that they can approach staff if they have a concern, and that their concern will be listened to and acted upon. Pupils confirmed that bullying rarely happens, but that where it does, that it is dealt with effectively. The academy uses pupil mentors and anti-bullying ambassadors to support pupils who are experiencing difficulties of any kind, while the vertical tutor system, where each tutor group includes pupils from every year group, encourages pupils to support each other. The academy also offers support to pupils through the 'Bridge Centre', an area of the academy to which pupils can go if they have any concerns. Most pupils who inspectors met, particularly those in Years 7 and 8, spoke highly of the support they receive from other pupils and from staff at the Bridge Centre.

The academy's curriculum, the programme of assemblies and the weekly 'Life' lessons ensure that pupils know how to stay safe. 'Life' lessons are lessons where pupils consider current affairs and issues concerning their welfare. A recent review of the 'Life' lessons has ensured that the topics covered respond to emerging local and national issues. Pupils enjoy 'Life' lessons as they present opportunities to interact with their teachers differently and to discuss issues of importance and concern to them. Topics that have been covered recently include consent, both online and in person, while Year 9 pupils have recently watched a theatre production on teenage pregnancy. Pupils also receive information about keeping safe in their pupil planners. Topics covered include online safety, cycling and bus safety.

The local academy council and the academy trust's board of directors take their responsibilities for ensuring pupils' safety very seriously. Governors receive regular training on matters relating to safeguarding and are well informed about their legal duties. They hold leaders to account to ensure that pupils are safe, and regularly check the academy's policies to ensure that they meet requirements. Some policies, however, are academy-wide policies and do not necessarily reflect the local circumstances of Outwood Academy Valley.

### **External support**

The academy engages effectively with a variety of external agencies in order to support their pupils' welfare. The academy works with agencies in relation to informing pupils about their own safety, including issues concerning online safety and child sexual exploitation. The academy also engages with agencies to support pupils' families, where such support is appropriate. Senior leaders work effectively

with the services provided by the local authority to provide support for pupils about whom the academy has safeguarding concerns.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Further embed strategies undertaken to improve attendance and reduce exclusions on the part of all pupils, to ensure that all benefit from the wide range of opportunities the academy offers.
- Improve communication with parents and pupils so that they fully understand the expectations of the academy relating to pupils' behaviour and conduct and the sanctions imposed where these are not met.
- Ensure that all safeguarding documentation reflects local issues and arrangements pertinent to the academy.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Nottinghamshire, to the Secretary of State for Education and the Chair of the Governing Body. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Simon Hollingsworth  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**