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Mrs Victoria Setters
Executive Headteacher
Short Stay School for Norfolk
The Locksley School
Locksley Road
Norwich
Norfolk
NR4 6LG

Dear Mrs Setters

No formal designation inspection of Short Stay School for Norfolk

Following my visit to your school on 6 March 2018, 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 behaviour in your school.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with the no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out at no notice because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills was concerned about the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements.

Evidence

Inspectors visited six of the school's eight sites in and around Norwich, and in Great Yarmouth. The school's other two sites in King's Lynn were not visited. Inspectors scrutinised the single central record which is managed centrally by the Engage Multi-Academy Trust. They met with you, and other senior leaders responsible for child protection on each of the sites visited. They also met with a representative of the trust board, a member of the governing board and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. Three representatives of the trust board attended the final meeting at the end of the inspection.

Inspectors also scrutinised a range of documentation provided by your leaders about attendance, behaviour and the actions taken to safeguard pupils. Inspectors visited lessons on all six sites to observe pupils at work, and spoke informally with them during breaks and lunchtimes.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

The school is an alternative provision school for pupils who are at risk of being excluded, or have been permanently excluded, from their mainstream schools. Three of the school's sites are specialist units with NHS psychological therapies staff to support pupils with very specific behavioural, emotional or mental health needs. A fourth site works in partnership with the national care provider, Childhood First, to provide pupils with specialist therapeutic care and education. The other four sites are designed as short-stay provision for pupils. Pupils are referred to the school by the local authority. Many of them arrive at different times of the year. A small proportion of older pupils are taught off-site for part of the week at a range of local providers.

Most pupils are White British; very few of them are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding to support disadvantaged pupils) is above average. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and a higher than average proportion of them have an education, health and care plan.

Since the last inspection in February 2017, a new, purpose-built facility has opened on the Locksley site, enabling key stage 4 pupils from each of the school's secondary sites to study a small range of vocational awards. Three new senior leaders have joined the school.

Safeguarding

The school's complex nature, catering for pupils of different ages and abilities with a diverse range of special educational and health needs, across eight sites dispersed across a wide area, adds significantly to the challenge of keeping pupils safe. Inspectors found that safeguarding is prioritised to manage the many risks faced by the school's very vulnerable pupils, and ensure their safety.

Over 40 staff are trained as designated safeguarding leads. Each site has a designated lead and assistant lead on duty each day to respond to safeguarding matters that arise. Safeguarding is considered to be 'everybody's business'. Procedures for raising concerns are fully understood. They are used regularly by staff who have been trained to respond promptly when safeguarding issues arise. Weekly staff briefings and bulletins alert staff of new concerns arising, and maintain their focus on ensuring pupils' safety and welfare.

Inspectors found that these procedures are applied consistently across all of the sites visited. However, this leads to too many 'records of concern'. For example,

over 1,000 have been recorded so far this year, but only a very small proportion of them have required a referral to the local safeguarding board. You acknowledge that there is scope to reduce this workload without undermining the school's established procedures. A nominated governor with experience of safeguarding in other settings is working with leaders to improve this, and to assist them in monitoring the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding procedures.

Safeguarding records are maintained systematically and stored safely on each school site. Timelines of incidents and concerns raised are logged in each pupil's personal files. Actions taken by designated safeguarding leaders and other support agencies are recorded in detail to show that issues have been followed up to keep pupils safe. The good partnerships with child protection support agencies, noted at the time of the last inspection, have been maintained. All necessary checks are made when recruiting new staff. The single central record is complete, but is unwieldy, as it lists over 250 employees and volunteers. It does not present clearly their different roles and responsibilities, and lists some checks of staff that are not needed.

Some progress has been made since the last inspection in resolving weaknesses in the administration of safeguarding. Safeguarding training for staff is managed centrally to ensure that all training is up to date. A new safeguarding handbook has been introduced this year to ensure that staff remain vigilant at all times. There is greater consistency and coherence to safeguarding procedures and record-keeping across all of the school's sites. However, not enough use is made of this and other information gained from leaders' monitoring and evaluation to spot gaps and trends, or to illustrate in detail the impact they are having in leading improvements.

Suitable action has been taken by you and trust leaders following two serious complaints about the school. Steps have been taken to assess the risks to pupils' safety in the school's grounds, make improvements and tighten up procedures for monitoring and reporting upon safeguarding matters. Entry and exit of school buildings are controlled and school grounds are closely supervised. Action has been taken to risk-assess each site and prevent pupils from climbing on buildings.

Inspectors found that on most of the sites visited, pupils' behaviour was managed effectively. Pupils benefit greatly from the one-to-one supervision and support provided for them. Those with very challenging behaviours are managed well by staff, who show endless patience, tolerance and understanding. The details of incidents requiring restraining pupils to keep them safe from harm are logged, but are not routinely analysed to monitor the use of physical restraint. Classrooms are generally calm and purposeful. Outside of lessons, pupils behave themselves but too many of them on the Locksley site openly smoke during breaks and lunchtimes.

You, the trust and the local authority share frustrations about the logjam caused by the lack of suitable providers, and the reluctance of some schools to respond to leaders' requests to reintegrate pupils. The lack of a 'next step' back into

mainstream schools continues to undermine leaders' actions to improve behaviour. Records show that, currently, too many pupils are excluded temporarily from school.

Attendance remains stubbornly low. You acknowledge that this presents a significant risk to protecting pupils, and now include the monitoring of individual pupils' absence as part of their safeguarding arrangements. Attendance is rightly seen as a top priority for improvement. New arrangements, including first-day calls to the parents and follow-up visits to the homes of pupils absent from school are in place but this is not leading to significant improvement. Action plans have been revised recently to reduce persistent absence and raise overall attendance.

External support

You are currently forging stronger links with the local authority to develop the school's provision and coordinate a more effective approach to reintegrating pupils after their short stay in the school. Two safeguarding matters involving members of staff have been referred to the local authority. Both cases have been managed appropriately by senior leaders.

Priorities for further improvement

- Reduce persistent absence and raise overall attendance by implementing fully your revised action plans, and monitoring the impact of these actions closely to ensure that they lead to significant improvement.
- Make much better use of the information gained from regular monitoring and evaluation to spot gaps or trends, and to illustrate in detail the impact you and your leaders are having in securing improvements.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing board and the chair of the Engage Multi-Academy Trust board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Norfolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector