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20 December 2018

Mrs Andrews  
The Steiner Academy Hereford  
Much Dewchurch  
Hereford  
Herefordshire  
HR2 8DL

Dear Mrs Andrews

### **No formal designation inspection of The Steiner Academy Hereford**

Following my visit with Philippa Darley, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 11–12 December 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 for pupils at the academy.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors considered a wide range of evidence relating to safeguarding and wider health and safety matters. Inspectors reviewed the following documents: the school's single central record, a sample of recruitment files, child protection records, risk assessments, and the school's policies and procedures. I met with you, the vice-principal and the business manager to discuss the school's effectiveness in relation to safeguarding arrangements. Inspectors undertook a tour of the whole school site to consider the extent to which areas are safe and secure. I met with 10 governors, including the co-chair of the governing body.

Inspectors held meetings with several leaders to discuss the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for: attendance, behaviour, exclusions, special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), children looked after, and the monitoring of teaching and learning. Inspectors undertook observations of teaching in every phase of the school. These observations were undertaken jointly with leaders. Inspectors reviewed learning in pupils' books during observations and in separate meetings. Inspectors spoke to a small group of pupils and gathered the views of pupils throughout the inspection.

Inspectors took account of the 146 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors reviewed the 49 written responses from parents, which were hand-delivered or emailed for our attention during the inspection. Inspectors met with parents at the start and end of the school day.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

## **Context**

There are 334 pupils on roll at your school. Almost 80% of pupils are white British. Approximately 17% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is very low. Around 18% of pupils have SEND, of which 1.8% have an education, health and care plan. You were appointed as the school's new principal in September 2018. A vice-principal, who oversees the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, has been in post for just over one year. Several teaching staff left the school in the last academic year.

In March 2018 the school received a short inspection and inspectors judged that the leadership team were maintaining a good quality of education. During this inspection leaders and those responsible for governance were asked to: ensure that arrangements for recording safeguarding concerns were embedded as quickly as possible; and that work continues to improve the quality of teaching and thereby outcomes for pupils.

You have quickly gained the support and trust of the whole school community. Leaders and governors have devised an effective development plan that focuses on the school's most important priorities. You regularly re-visit these priorities to evaluate the impact of actions. The school is forward-thinking, proactive and responsive to areas that are identified as needing further improvement.

The school's procedures for recording safeguarding concerns have improved. Leaders have introduced specific forms for staff to record concerns on. These forms are acted upon by designated safeguarding leads. Designated leads also transfer any concerns onto chronologies. The chronologies provide very useful overviews of different pupils' needs. Record-keeping is fit for purpose.

Leaders have also introduced supervision meetings. At these meetings, leaders talk about any concerns that have been recorded by staff and explore with one another the actions that are being taken to safeguard pupils. However, leaders are not keeping minutes of these meetings, and on occasion they are not fully detailing the rationale for the actions they take. As a result, systems are not as rigorous as they might be and leaders are not able to offer one another the highest level of critical support about safeguarding matters that is possible.

The single central record is compliant, and staff are appropriately vetted before they join the school.

Governors know the school very well and offer leaders an appropriate level of challenge and support. Governors make regular checks on policy and procedures to reassure themselves that pupils are safe. The governing body are a highly skilled and capable group of people.

General site safety is well managed. Leaders have devised effective arrangements for supervising pupils and assessing any risks. They have commissioned external experts to support their oversight of health and safety matters. Pupils are aware of which areas of the school grounds are 'out of bounds'. Every pupil inspectors spoke to said that they feel safe. Pupils act responsibly and follow their teachers' instructions with care.

Parents overwhelmingly feel that the school is a safe place for their children to learn. A very large number of families took the time to write to the inspection team and share their experiences of school life. Their feedback is extremely positive. Typical views shared by parents include: 'We are full of admiration for the way in which the school has fostered and developed our children' and 'We cannot emphasise enough how wonderful and exceptional this school is and just how happy we are that we made the decision to come here'. Of the 146 responses to Parent View since September 2018, 95% of parents responding feel that the school is well led and managed, and 96% would recommend the school to another parent.

Security arrangements have been enhanced by the introduction of new parking arrangements and a 'holding' area to manage the arrival and departure of pupils. Staff supervise pupils carefully as they come into school. Parents who wrote to inspectors state that they are satisfied with the school's arrangements for supervision and security. Parents also state that any changes are managed well and that communication between home and school is strong.

The school has recently reviewed its personal, social, health and education (PSHE) curriculum. There are several emerging strengths in the organisation of learning in this aspect of the curriculum. For example, pupils have opportunities to discuss and learn about a range of matters including: e-safety; respect for the environment, healthy eating and diversity. Inspectors saw evidence of this learning in pupils' books. However, in some year groups, evidence of learning is not as strong. There is work to do in ensuring that pupils have more frequent opportunities to discuss, in greater depth and breadth, age-appropriate issues.

Pupils' behaviour was strong throughout the inspection. Pupils are diligent, caring and thoughtful. They enjoy coming to school and raised no concerns about poor behaviour or bullying. Pupils know who they can go to if they have a concern. Relationships between pupils and staff are very positive. Pupils with specific social

and emotional needs receive effective support. Staff plan and deliver specific sessions to help pupils manage their feelings and improve their behaviour. There have been no exclusions since the start of the school year.

Overall attendance has improved slightly in the last year and the number of pupils who are classed as persistently absent is falling. Leaders track attendance carefully and there are no significant gaps between the attendance of different groups of pupils.

Support for pupils with SEND and those looked after has many strengths. Staff understand pupils' needs well. They use this knowledge to develop bespoke programmes of support. Inspectors saw several examples of where support is having a very positive impact on pupils' personal development and welfare. Education, health and care plans are suitably detailed. The school has an inclusive and nurturing feel. This strong spirit of inclusion is also shared by parents. However, strengths noted in one-to-one support and small-group sessions are not always replicated in whole-class sessions. In some instances, the work of learning support assistants could be more effective. For example, the day-to-day support that pupils receive in developing their core skills, including those in English and mathematics, could be developed further.

Inspectors observed teaching across all school phases. There are many strengths in practice, particularly in the school's kindergarten classes. For example, in kindergarten, children enjoy a rich diet of learning that enables them to recall quite complex stories and rhymes. Children use their embroidery skills to stitch designs on to drawstring bags. Other pupils thread different materials and create repeating patterns. Children in the kindergarten are immersed in learning and play. They love to explore the highly appealing outdoor areas.

In other phases of the school, pupils' learning is developed through teachers' effective questioning and strong subject knowledge. Leaders have worked effectively with teachers to develop practice over the last year. Arrangements for ensuring that pupils undertake learning that matches their needs have been a focus of training. Teachers welcomed inspectors into their classes and were keen to talk about what they do and how they want learning to evolve further. Staff demonstrate a desire to improve constantly and are forward-looking.

Despite these notable strengths in teaching, there is some variability in practice. Above all, there is scope for some pupils to receive a greater level of challenge in their work. Teachers do not routinely share what they do or appreciate the full impact of their collective efforts. Leaders have also identified that they want to create more opportunities for teachers to jointly moderate the judgements they make about pupil's progress. This is an important priority for the school that may strengthen the reliability of assessment information.

## **External support**

The school have recently received support from the local authority. The support focused on reviewing safeguarding procedures and the effectiveness of general health and safety. The local authority are also satisfied that the school's safeguarding arrangements are effective.

## **Priorities for further improvement**

- Strengthen current safeguarding practice further by ensuring that designated leads act as critical friends and record all decision-making more fully.
- Embed the new PSHE curriculum and provide more frequent opportunities for pupils to discuss age-appropriate issues.
- Ensure that support staff receive additional training so that they further meet the individual needs of vulnerable learners.
- Ensure that the strong teaching practice that is evident across the school is shared more widely, including in kindergarten, so that pupils are offered even more challenge and their core skills are developed further.
- Create more opportunities for teachers to jointly moderate the judgements they make about pupils' progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Keay  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**