

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231  
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24 May 2021

Kate Andrews  
Principal  
The Steiner Academy  
Much Dewchurch  
Hereford  
Herefordshire  
HR2 8DL

Dear Mrs Andrews

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

Following my visit with Eve Morris, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 28 April 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This 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 wished to determine the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the school as concerns had been raised with Ofsted.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors scrutinised the single central register and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. They also met with the principal, vice principal, school staff, groups of pupils, the chair and vice chair of the governing body, and spoke with three representatives of the local authority. Inspectors toured the school site and visited classrooms.

Inspectors looked at a range of documents, which included: records of attendance, exclusion information, behaviour logs, school policies, records of governors' meetings, information about complaints, and curriculum information connected with pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE). Inspectors also considered 140 recent responses to Ofsted Parent View and 11 emails from parents.

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

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

### **Context**

There are 339 pupils on roll. Most are White British. Approximately 18% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. About 23% of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, of which 2.4% have an education, health and care plan.

The school received a section 8 inspection in December 2018, which found safeguarding to be effective. Prior to this, an Ofsted inspection in March 2018 confirmed that the school's overall effectiveness continued to be good.

### **Main Findings**

This inspection was carried out in response to information sent to Ofsted that raised concerns about the school's processes in relation to safeguarding, behaviour and handling complaints. Inspectors found no evidence to substantiate any of these concerns.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Policies and staff training are up to date and procedures work as they should. When any concerns arise, staff know what to do and respond quickly. Information is recorded correctly and shared in the right way with the right people. In addition, leaders are receptive and responsive to advice from the local authority and other professional services. During this inspection, inspectors examined some case studies. In all instances, record keeping was thorough and included detailed chronologies to show what happened when and what actions were taken in response. The school's actions present as proportionate and responsible, with pupils' safety being put first.

The single central register of employment checks on staff complies with statutory requirements. There is an induction process for new staff, which includes a focus on safeguarding and expectations. On top of this, staff receive regular updates about safety and welfare matters.

Pupils say that they feel very safe in school. They report that they are treated fairly and that adults listen to their ideas and help them with any problems. Of the 140 respondents to Ofsted Parent View, 98% agree that the school keeps pupils safe.

Governors have established systems and routines for assuring themselves that safeguarding is robust. Governors have attended appropriate training and have an informed understanding of their statutory duties and strategic role. Interaction between adults and pupils follows the Steiner principles. There is a clear hierarchy of leadership and accountability and a set of well-defined school rules.

Leaders have created a written code of conduct for staff to follow. This is informed by the Teachers' Standards and the principles of Steiner education. If any member of staff falls short of expectations, then leaders take appropriate action. Looking ahead, there is scope to improve this code of conduct so there is no room for any ambiguity about what is and is not acceptable.

Similarly, the school's behaviour policy would also benefit from some additional information. Currently, it does not capture many of the supportive actions that staff take to promote and acknowledge pupils' positive behaviour. Pupils who spoke with inspectors explained that they felt valued by staff. They say they are treated with respect and that staff encourage them in their endeavours and personal development. However, the current behaviour policy includes little information about these positive behaviour strategies. Instead, it gives more weighting to sanctions. While the sanctions set out are fair and reasonable, the current balance between incentive and sanction is not quite right.

Over the past three years, the use of exclusion has declined and procedures for issuing and recording exclusions have improved. When reviewing practice, leaders present as reflective and evaluative. They are able to look back at previous actions with a critical eye. They acknowledge when they have not got things right and learn from the past to inform what they do in the future. The school's current processes and safeguards are fit for purpose.

Instances of bullying or unkind behaviour are rare, but if any occurs then it is dealt with and recorded properly.

The school's complaints policy is based on the model policy produced by the Department for Education. It is fit for purpose and applied fairly and correctly. Documented records of complaints and the school's responses are well organised. These records provide a clear trail of leaders' actions towards resolving any concerns. When necessary, the school has liaised with the local authority and other services to support pupils and their families. In their responses to Ofsted Parent View, almost all parents who have had cause to raise a concern with the school reported that they were satisfied with the school's response.

Attendance is monitored carefully. Any unexplained absences are followed up quickly. When any part-time attendance pattern is agreed with parents, this is for a short-term specific purpose.

Pupils' conduct in class, outdoors and when moving around the school is generally calm and good humoured. They present as at ease with one another and with adults. Indeed, the school provides a very inclusive environment. All have equal opportunity to succeed and the school's PSHE programme responds to and supports pupils' understanding of equality matters. Pupils report that most, but not all, adults are comfortable using current terminology relating to gender and identity. They say

that the inclusive nature of the school community is a major strength, and a significant factor in helping them to enjoy their education.

### **External support**

The local authority has worked with the school in connection with attendance and safeguarding matters. When needs be, the school has been quick to refer matters to the appropriate local authority officer or other professional agency.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Update the staff code of conduct and the behaviour policy to include more information. Specifically, to include more details about the school's many positive behaviour management strategies and the associated expectations on all staff.
- Ensure all staff understand these updates and are confident to follow the school's agreed policies and approaches, including the correct use of gender and identity terminology.

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

Martin Pye  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**