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Michelle Hughes
Executive Principal
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Dear Ms Hughes

Urgent inspection of Maltings Academy

Following my unannounced visit with Charlie Fordham, His Majesty's Inspector, to the school on 1 May 2024, I write on behalf of His 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 the school.

This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for urgent inspections. The inspection was carried out because His Majesty's Chief Inspector wished to determine the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the school as concerns had been raised with Ofsted about the quality of education, in particular the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and pupils' behaviour and attitudes.

We do not give graded judgements on urgent inspections. However, if we find some evidence that overall standards may be declining, but where no serious concerns have been identified, then the next inspection will normally be a graded inspection, which will be carried out under section 5 of the Act and be brought forward. If we have serious concerns, we will deem the urgent inspection as a graded inspection immediately.

Evidence

We scrutinised the single central record and met with leaders to discuss the school's approach to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We held meetings with the executive principal, principal designate, senior leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator and representatives of the trust executive team.

In addition, we visited lessons and had discussions with groups of pupils to gather their views on their experience at school.

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

Arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Main findings

The actions you have taken to improve the provision for pupils are beginning to show a positive impact. You have put systems in place to manage pupils' behaviour. At the same time, you have implemented a change to the culture in the school. Explicit teaching of your expectations means that pupils are clear about how they should behave. Staff are increasingly confident in how they model expected behaviour. Staff are becoming more consistent in challenging pupils' behaviour when they need to. Some learning is still disrupted by poor behaviour. However, these interruptions to learning are reducing. Pupils say their learning is less impeded. They are starting to enjoy learning in a calmer, more purposeful environment. Around school, pupils are polite and respectful. They arrive in the morning ready to learn. Pupils move around the building and outside spaces sensibly.

The introduction of the 'Maltings' Way' is increasing pupils' understanding of the importance of treating each other with respect. Incidents of unkind behaviour are reducing. Pupils know that bullying is not acceptable and that you will support them if they encounter it. Their confidence in reporting these incidents is increasing. However, some older pupils feel that it can take too long to reach a conclusion. The school ensures that those pupils who have suffered bullying feel valued and looked after.

Your daily review of behaviour and safeguarding reports helps you to address issues as they arise. This means pupils see you tackling the matters that concern them most. You have made it clear to all what is acceptable and what is not. Pupils are highly articulate about their experience in school. Younger pupils are positive. Older pupils are frustrated by the legacy of poor behaviour and lack of support they have received in the past. They value the improvements they see, but some pupils remain annoyed about why it has taken so long to address concerns.

You have developed a school culture rooted in the belief that every pupil should feel safe. You have established systems and structures that support pupils when they feel at their most vulnerable. If pupils need help, you do all that is possible to get it for them. Your records provide a clear picture of the challenges pupils face and how you support them. Governors and trust colleagues provide regular checks to make sure your approaches remain effective. Pupils are safe. However, some pupils still worry that some aspects of school life make them feel unsafe. This is reflected in the perception of some parents. Many of these issues relate to experiences that happened in the past that you have now begun to address.

You have started to tackle historical weaknesses in the provision for pupils with SEND. You have begun to re-engage pupils and parents in the planning and review processes. Already, the communication between families, pupils and staff has improved. However, some of the information provided to support teachers lacks the detail and precision needed to help them best adapt their teaching.

The support for pupils with SEND when they feel at their most vulnerable has increased. There are resources and spaces provided to help pupils with SEND calm themselves and re-engage with their learning. Pupils' needs and worries are routinely discussed with pastoral leaders to address them as quickly as possible. Consequently, the pastoral care provided for pupils with SEND is improving. Many pupils with SEND take part in, and enjoy, the wider life of the school.

You understand that the current provision for pupils is not yet good enough. However, you, your team and the trust are determined to make sure all pupils experience high-quality provision as soon as possible. You have addressed many of the key issues head-on, with well-thought-out plans. Pupils are beginning to benefit from the improvements you have already made.

Additional support

The trust has provided significant support to help you improve the provision for pupils. Trustees have ensured that additional leadership capacity and resources help you attend to the priority issues that will impact on pupils' experience and learning as quickly as possible. The trust provides high levels of challenge to ensure that your strategies are as sustainable as they are effective. You have worked closely with the local authority to ensure that your approaches to safeguarding are effective.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer or equivalent of Academies Education Trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Dave Gibson
His Majesty's Inspector