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9 February 2017

Mrs Luci Windle  
Executive headteacher  
Pennine View School  
Old Road  
Conisbrough  
Doncaster  
South Yorkshire  
DN12 3LR

Dear Mrs Windle

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Pennine View School**

Following my visit to your school on 1 February 2017, 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 school.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I scrutinised the single central record, staff recruitment files and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. I met with you, your senior team, staff members, two representatives of the 'intervention board' (interim governing body arrangements) and the chief executive of Nexus. I met a representative from the local authority's standards and effectiveness service. I talked to pupils at breaktime and in lessons. I spoke to parents who came to the school at the start and end of the school day. I also took account of parents' responses to your recent survey of their views. We visited a number of lessons together to see pupils and staff working together.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

## **Context**

Pennine View School is an average-sized special school that takes pupils from the age of seven to 16 years. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A much higher than average proportion of pupils are known to be entitled to free school meals. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They all have either a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Since the last inspection, the headteacher, two teachers and three teaching assistants have left the school. A new business manager has been appointed. The deputy headteacher became the acting headteacher in July 2016 until your arrival as interim executive headteacher in November 2016. The local authority has worked with Nexus, the preferred academy sponsor, to ensure a smooth transition to the school becoming an academy by Easter 2017. Following the review of governance in the autumn term, the governing body was disbanded and, with the support of the local authority, an 'intervention board' was appointed to drive improvement and steer the school through academisation and beyond. You are also a substantive headteacher of a Nexus academy. You have secured support from specialist staff and external consultants to work with the school to help tackle the safeguarding concerns found at the time of the inspection and those found on your arrival in November.

## **Main findings**

At the time of the previous inspection, the school was judged to be inadequate because of inadequacies in safeguarding arrangements. Leadership of safeguarding is now robust. Making sure pupils are safe and developing systems to keep them safe has been a key focus of you, your staff, Nexus and the local authority. Staff all confirm a much stronger focus on safeguarding. They feel there is now a culture of safeguarding and know that it is 'everyone's responsibility'. Immediately following the inspection, action was taken to rectify the weaknesses in the single central record and in the recruitment files of staff. This work, and additional work in the autumn term, has ensured that the record is fully compliant with Department for Education requirements. The single central record is checked tenaciously by the business manager. Staff recruitment files are now in good order. Significant work has been undertaken to retrieve references where there were omissions in historical files. Three senior staff and three members of the 'intervention board' are trained in the safe recruitment of staff. Robust checks are in place for the forthcoming recruitment of a substantive headteacher and a class teacher.

Upon your arrival, you were concerned about the lack of structure and rigour of record-keeping for children at risk or in need. You have transformed the processes, ensuring that records are secure, kept up to date and have a consistent format. Cause of concern forms have been developed to enable staff to record any concern regarding a pupil's safety or care. These forms are checked immediately by the designated lead for safeguarding. Timely referrals are made to agencies such as children's social care when needed. You and your senior team monitor pupils who

are causing concern. You provide detailed reports to the 'intervention board' so they can check the impact of the actions you are all taking to minimise risks and support these pupils.

The chair of the governing body worked swiftly with the local authority to ensure secure effective interim leadership arrangements in July 2016 and to secure your appointment in November. The required independent review of the governing body's effectiveness was completed in the autumn term. This identified ongoing weaknesses in governance and as a result, in consultation with the local authority and Nexus, the governing body was disbanded and an interim 'intervention board' was put in place. Members include the previous chair of the governing body, a local authority representative and senior leaders from successful organisations who have a strong track record in safeguarding and school improvement. The board members have a wealth of experience and have already established a work programme that puts safeguarding at the heart of its work. The board has carried out a rigorous review of the school's website to identify, and then rectify, weaknesses and non-compliance with government requirements. Actions are being taken to ensure all required information is available on the new website when the school converts to an academy on the planned date of 1 April 2017. Key safeguarding documents and policies were updated and placed on the website in the autumn term.

Significant and timely work has been undertaken to upskill staff in understanding what constitutes a safeguarding or child protection concern and their responsibilities in how to respond to such concerns. All staff now have up-to-date training, appropriate to their level of responsibility. They also receive regular updates from the designated lead for safeguarding. The designated lead for safeguarding and three senior members of staff, including you, are trained at the highest level. There is now a designated governor for safeguarding. Staff have a clear understanding of safeguarding risks including from neglect, radical or extremist views, child sexual exploitation, social media, sexting, female genital mutilation and children going missing from school. Whistle-blowing procedures are in place and staff have access to the local authority's policy and key contacts, including the local authority's designated lead for safeguarding, should they need to report a concern. New staff induction procedures are in place to make sure new staff are fully versed in the school's procedures. Any staff who may be absent from any of the regular training sessions are provided with the missed training on their return.

Since your appointment, regular reports on the school's progress in improving safeguarding arrangements have been presented to the previous governing body and the current board. This now includes detailed tracking on the behaviour and well-being of pupils, their attendance, the use of physical restraint and fixed-period exclusions. You have worked with staff to improve the management of behaviour so that fewer pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, are temporarily excluded. Strategies include a focus on restorative practice (which provides opportunities for pupils to reflect on their behaviour). Since your arrival in November, no pupils have been temporarily excluded and the number of incidents where restraint of a pupil

has been required has been low, having more than halved since the first half of the autumn term. Behaviour is well managed and pupils are polite and friendly and cooperate well with each other, on the yard and in class. Lessons are generally calm and purposeful and pupils are keen to contribute to their learning. Staff are adept at keeping a vigilant eye on pupils. Any potentially challenging incidents are quickly spotted and discreetly tackled, so learning can continue for other pupils without disruption. Sensitive one-to-one discussions between staff and pupils who are having a difficult time helps pupils settle down and quickly return to their learning. Pupils talk confidently about how they feel safe in school and understand what being safe means. They report that the school site is safe and teachers are always on hand if there is a problem or if they are feeling down. Pupils do not think bullying is much of an issue because staff will 'sort anything out'. They also say that pupils usually get along well and behaviour 'is usually fine'. The personal, social, health and economic curriculum ensures that pupils are taught about risks to their safety and how to manage them in a progressive and age-appropriate way as they move through the school.

Attendance rates, while still below average, are improving steadily as a result of actions taken. This includes immediate calls to parents when pupils do not turn up, and home visits when needed. The re-alignment of the work of the local authority's education welfare officer is also supporting the improvements seen. More needs to be done with local authorities who have placed pupils in the school. This is to ensure they do not condone the use of the code for authorised absence due to exceptional circumstances in the attendance register, when the situation is longstanding and not exceptional. This has had an impact on the significant proportion of authorised absences in the school.

### **External support**

Local authority staff provided early support in helping to tackle weaknesses in the single central record. The local authority human resources department worked closely with your own human resources service to advise on the best way forward to ensure suitable recruitment procedures. Upon your arrival in November, you commissioned work from external specialists in safeguarding to carry out a detailed audit of procedures. The outcome of this triggered the additional actions you have taken to improve the effectiveness of record-keeping for children at risk and in need. It also led to a separation of the pastoral and safeguarding teams. They now have very distinct responsibilities and are held to account for those responsibilities effectively. Strong support from Nexus, not least through placing you as interim executive headteacher, has been pivotal in the development of the rigorous practice now in school. The collective impact of the external support has helped to promote the culture of safeguarding now clearly evident across the school.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Work closely with local authorities that place pupils in the school to make sure that the code for authorised absence due to exceptional circumstances in the attendance register is used in exceptional circumstances only.

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

Yours sincerely

Margaret Farrow  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**