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22 March 2017

Kieran McGrane  
Headteacher  
Ponteland Community High School  
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Dear Mr McGrane

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Ponteland Community High School**

Following my visit with Debbie Redshaw, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Shelley Hesletine, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 9 March 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 and the behaviour and welfare of pupils at the school.

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and documentation relating to child protection arrangements. Records of attendance and behavioural incidents, as well as the school's arrangements for following up absence and incidents were also examined. Minutes of governors' meetings, school policies and development plans, health and safety checks and risk assessments were reviewed. Reports relating to attendance, behaviour and welfare were assessed. Inspectors investigated the school's work to support pupils in learning how to stay safe. Samples of pupils' work in books and folders, including in the sixth form, were examined.

We also met with you, senior leaders, groups of pupils and sixth-form students. I also spoke on the telephone with the vice-chair of the governing body and two

representatives of the local authority

Inspectors visited 33 lessons to check on behaviour and attitudes to learning. We also assessed and discussed behaviour with pupils before school, at break and lunchtimes and after school as they left for home.

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

Safeguarding is effective and behaviour is good. The school is effective in ensuring that pupils are well cared for.

### **Context**

Ponteland High School is an above average-sized secondary school with a sixth form. The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is also below the national average. Pupils are mostly White British.

### **Main findings**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and records are detailed and of high quality. You have created and maintain a strong and pervasive culture of safeguarding at the school. You, all staff and governors take your safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. You ensure that there is regular and effective training for all staff and governors to ensure that they are up to date in their knowledge and understanding of safeguarding. The school has strong and effective links with the relevant outside agencies when dealing with pupils and families who, from time to time, need additional support. You record your dealings with these agencies in a detailed and meticulous manner. You follow safeguarding issues through effectively, and engage with the local authority promptly.

Checks are conducted to ensure that the suitability of adults to work with children and school recruitment procedures reflect current guidance. References are collected and retained, and checks to verify identity are very thorough. You ensure that questions about safeguarding are included in interviews, and that all interview panels include governors and staff who have training and a good understanding of the most recent legislation and guidance on keeping children safe.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when online, because of the regular and effective actions of the school. Pupils also understand the forms that bullying can take and know what to do if it occurs. Pupils reported that they are very clear if they or a friend felt anxious about bullying, they would tell an adult at the school. They said that they were very confident it would be dealt with promptly and effectively. The school uses a range of strategies to alert pupils to the risks of

modern life and how to keep safe. This focus on ensuring that pupils know how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations is a key element of the school's personal, social and health curriculum and its complementary assembly programme. Pupils report that they enjoy these sessions and that they are effective in helping them look out for and deal with tricky situations. These sessions also alert and encourage pupils to the benefits of a healthy diet and regular exercise, and to the profound risks to health and well-being of smoking and drug abuse.

The sixth-form work in the area of personal well-being is not as well developed as it should be. The sixth-form personal, social and health education course lacks sufficient detail and guidance on personal and sexual health. It also misses some opportunities to prepare students for the variety of experiences and points of view they will encounter as they take their full places in modern British society. Sixth-form students said that they would welcome more opportunities to explore, sometimes, sensitive issues in the secure school setting. Inspectors agree with this judgement.

Pupils' behaviour at break, lunchtime and on arrival and departure from school is calm and orderly. Pupils say that staff, including senior staff, are a constant and visible presence around the school during breaks and at the start and end of the school day. The relations between staff and pupils are very good. Staff know pupils well. Pupils welcome the care that staff show them. Pupils' behaviour is generally good. They wear their uniforms smartly. They understand the ethos that underpins the school's code of conduct. They know it is there to promote good behaviour, mutual understanding and positive attitudes to learning. Those pupils who have, from time to time, erred from the straight and narrow, told me that staff had dealt with them fairly and had listened to them carefully. They had no doubt that staff had their best interests at heart.

The school has a complex and extended site. Inspectors saw pupils move around it before, after and between lessons with care and consideration for others and a real sense of purpose. Pupils arrived promptly to their lessons, equipped appropriately and eager for learning. Behaviour in lessons is good and pupils are, generally, keen to learn. Sixth-form students are particularly keen to do well and are, generally, satisfied with the quality of the teaching they experience.

Overall, attendance at the school is around the national average and improving. Staff monitor attendance very carefully and work hard and imaginatively to ensure that pupils attend school. The school has rigorous and effective systems in place to support and improve weaker attendance. The importance of regular attendance is emphasised through displays around the school. Good attendance is rewarded in a range of imaginative ways. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils, however, is not as good as that of their peers, although it is improving as a result of the school's careful and focused actions. You realise that there is still more to be done to ensure that disadvantaged pupils' attendance is as good as that of their peers.

## **External support**

The school receives very effective support from the local authority in matters associated with safeguarding and standards at the school. Staff and governors take up the wide range of training opportunities the local authority offers to further improve their skills and effectiveness in keeping children safe.

## **Priorities for further improvement**

- Leaders should ensure that sixth-form students have more opportunities to explore the multiplicity of modern British society, and develop their understanding of how to keep themselves well and safe.
- The school is working effectively to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders should ensure that disadvantaged pupils' attendance improves even further so that it is as good as that of their peers.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Evans  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**