

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



17 May 2019

Mr John Maher  
Headteacher  
Ashfield Comprehensive School  
Sutton Road  
Kirkby-in-Ashfield  
Nottingham  
Nottinghamshire  
NG17 8HP

Dear Mr Maher

### **No formal designation inspection of Ashfield Comprehensive School**

Following my visit with Russell Barr, Christine Horrocks and Steve Lewis, to your academy on 1 May 2019, 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 academy.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. Inspectors met with the headteacher, groups of pupils, members of staff and members of the governing body. The lead inspector met two governors, including the chair of the governing body. He also spoke to the representatives of the multi-academy trust, including the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer.

Inspectors observed 43 lessons or parts of lessons. Senior leaders carried out observations jointly with inspectors. Inspectors spoke with pupils in lessons and sampled books in classes. Inspectors also considered behaviour and attendance information, policies and procedures relating to special educational needs, safeguarding and child protection.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

## Context

Ashfield Comprehensive School became an academy in April 2012. It was a founding member of the Two Counties Trust. Ashfield School is a much larger than average secondary school with 2477 pupils on roll. It has a large sixth form with 501 students. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is just above the national average. The percentage of pupils included on the register of special educational needs is just above the national average, with fewer than the national average number of pupils with education, health and care plans.

There is a strong and effective culture of safeguarding at the school. Leaders, governors and trustees ensure that safeguarding arrangements work well and are fit for purpose. Governors ensure that safer recruitment processes are in place and pre-employment checks of teachers and other staff are thorough. The single central record is detailed and reflects a thorough approach to safeguarding and recruitment. Governors receive regular training and are aware of their responsibilities related to safeguarding. The named safeguarding governor visits the school regularly to monitor safeguarding processes. Members of the governing body receive regular updates and information about safeguarding, which they question and challenge appropriately.

Staff receive regular training, they know their responsibilities and understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. They are vigilant in ensuring that all pupils are safe. Staff make prompt referrals of any concerns, using the school's established reporting system, to the designated safeguarding leaders.

The team of safeguarding leaders have a strong understanding of safeguarding and their responsibilities. They are fully committed to supporting pupils and keeping them safe. Leaders receive regular training and have high expectations of all staff. Safeguarding leaders are meticulous in maintaining safeguarding records which are detailed, accurate and regularly reviewed. Very effective systems are in place to support vulnerable pupils.

Leaders have high expectations of other services. They follow up concerns swiftly and work in partnership with outside agencies to provide support for pupils and families. Leaders tenaciously follow up referrals to external agencies in a timely manner.

The school's curriculum helps pupils to understand how to deal with risks and how to keep themselves safe in different situations. For example, pupils in key stages 3 and 4 are taught about online safety and the safe use of mobile phones, healthy relationships, mental health and well-being, as well as the risks involved in radicalisation and extremism.

School leaders maintain regular contact with those who provide alternative provision for a minority of pupils. They ensure that regular communication and visits mean that pupils are safe when attending off-site provision. Leaders ensure that information about attendance, progress and behaviour is received and updated regularly about each pupil.

Staff also keep pupils safe through the implementation of a very effective behaviour policy across the school. Both pupils and staff, who met with inspectors, commented on improved behaviour over the last two years. Inspectors witnessed consistently positive behaviour in lessons and during social times. Pupils' behaviour was seen to be respectful, polite and friendly. Their attitudes to learning in lessons was also seen to be positive. Pupils are very proud of their school.

Leaders' records and analysis of behaviour show a consistently strong picture of behaviour. There has been a reduction in fixed-term exclusions in recent years, with the proportions of exclusions being well below the national average for secondary schools. Incidents of prejudicial and discriminatory behaviour are rare, but when they do occur, they are dealt with swiftly and appropriately by staff. There have been no permanent exclusions since the school became an academy.

Pupils' overall attendance is positive. The percentage of pupils who are absent is below the national average. Attendance has also improved over the last two years. The school's systems for monitoring attendance and reducing absence also ensure that pupils are kept safe.

Students in the sixth form do not have sufficient opportunities to deepen their understanding of risks in a range of situations. Students who met with the inspectors, commented on the lack of opportunity to learn about radicalisation and extremism in particular.

Pupils feel safe at school and have a clear understanding of what bullying is. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that bullying is very rare. They are confident that they can turn to an adult, who will deal appropriately with any concerns or worries they may have.

Overwhelmingly, parents who responded to the school's recent survey of parental views say that their children are safe and happy at the school. Likewise, staff who spoke with inspectors believe the same. Pupils who met with the inspectors said that they feel cared for and are safe. They say that they are listened to when they have worries and concerns. They are confident that adults will deal with any concerns appropriately.

The staff know pupils and their families very well, and this is a strength of the school.

## **Priorities for further improvement**

- To ensure that sixth-form students have opportunities to deepen their personal, social, health and economic learning, enabling them to understand risks in different situations.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Nottinghamshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Davies  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**