

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



17 February 2023

Ian Colling
Headteacher
Magdalen College School
Waynflete Avenue
Brackley
Northamptonshire
NN13 6FB

Dear Mr Colling

Urgent inspection of Magdalen College School

Following my visit with Dawn Ashbolt, His Majesty's Inspector, and Rachel Tordoff, His Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 24 January 2023, 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 your 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 Ofsted was concerned about these arrangements. There were also concerns about aspects of pupils' personal development.

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 other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We met with the headteacher, the designated safeguarding lead and trustees, including the chair of the board of trustees.

We also met with other school leaders, groups of pupils from all year groups and groups of staff. We visited lessons and observed pupils at various times of the school day. We

scrutinised documents, including information about the school's personal development programme and the school's use of alternative providers, attendance records, and leaders' plans to improve the school.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Main Findings

Leaders act in pupils' best interests. Staff know their responsibilities and understand their role in keeping pupils safe. Leaders provide effective safeguarding training for staff. Staff are alert and know how to pass on any concerns they might have about a pupil's welfare. Leaders are knowledgeable about how to support pupils. They work well with families and external organisations, including the local police and the school nurse, to ensure that pupils get the help they need. Leaders secure support from specialist agencies to help pupils who are at risk of harm. The school also provides specialist support for pupils' mental health. There is a school counsellor and a well-being practitioner who give targeted help to individuals and groups of pupils.

Leaders create a safe environment for pupils. They manage safe recruitment effectively, have robust systems in place to protect pupils when using computers in school, and carry out risk assessments to manage access to the school site. When pupils are not in school or are receiving education at a different provider, leaders ensure that staff carry out timely welfare checks. However, leaders do not have a clear enough system for recording these checks.

Leaders have designed an ambitious and effective curriculum for personal, citizenship, social, health and economic (PCSHE) education. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They ensure that pupils have opportunities to apply their learning in class discussions and debates. Pupils take their PCSHE education learning seriously and develop secure knowledge and understanding.

Curriculum leaders and safeguarding leaders work together closely to ensure that pupils learn how to keep themselves and others safe. For example, leaders know about the risks that pupils might face in the local area and they ensure that pupils learn how to manage these risks, should they face them. Pupils told inspectors what they have learned about drug and alcohol use and misuse, about staying safe online, and about what makes a healthy relationship. Pupils also value their learning about physical and mental health.

Pupils learn about the protected characteristics and the importance of respecting everyone. Pupils said that most pupils in school treat each other with respect. They said that a small number of pupils use discriminatory language. They have confidence that, when staff know about such incidents, they deal with them appropriately. However, some pupils in key stage 4 said they are reluctant to talk to staff when their peers use

inappropriate language towards them for fear of being called a 'snitch'. Leaders acknowledge this.

Governors are effective in holding leaders to account for safeguarding arrangements and child protection processes. They check what leaders tell them by visiting school and talking to pupils and staff. Governors and leaders reflect on the work they do. Through their monitoring work, they identify ways to keep improving the school's work to keep pupils safe.

Additional support

School leaders welcome the support and challenge provided by external partners. Leaders' improvement plans are closely informed by their work with local authority safeguarding leaders and by an external audit of aspects of safeguarding commissioned in the summer of 2022.

Priorities for further improvement

- Leaders must ensure that systems to record welfare checks on pupils who are not attending school or who are receiving their education off site are suitably robust, so that staff can access more readily all the information they need about a pupil.
- Pupils are confident that staff deal with incidents involving the use of discriminatory language when staff are aware they have happened. However, some key stage 4 pupils said they would not always report instances of pupils using derogatory or discriminatory language towards others. Leaders should continue to build a culture where such language is not tolerated, and where pupils feel confident to tell staff when it happens.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for West Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Aoife Galletly
His Majesty's Inspector