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Mrs Kathryn Matthews
Bradford Girls' Grammar School
Squire Lane
Bradford
West Yorkshire
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Dear Mrs Matthews

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Bradford Girls' Grammar School

Following my visit to your school on 18 December 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in March 2019. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

Leaders and managers are taking effective actions towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Bradford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dimitris Spiliotis
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in March 2019

- Urgently amend safeguarding practice, so that all allegations about staff of a safeguarding nature are handled in accordance with statutory guidance and all necessary actions are taken.
- Take further action to improve pupils' personal development and welfare by ensuring that all children, pupils and students feel confident that they have an adult whom they can tell, should they be worried about anything.
- Improve outcomes in the sixth form, so that students achieve the grades of which they are capable, by:
 - improving the quality of teaching, so that teachers match tasks more closely to the needs of the students
 - ensuring that all students feel able to approach teachers for further help when stuck or unsure of any learning
 - implementing the proposed broader curriculum to ensure that students are guided onto the most appropriate courses for their abilities and aptitudes.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 18 December 2019

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work and scrutinised school documents, including safeguarding records, behaviour information and information around the management of allegations against staff. He met with the principal, vice-principal, assistant principal (leader of the sixth form) and members of the governing body. The inspector also held a telephone conversation with the interim strategic manager education safeguarding from the local authority.

The inspector spoke with a wide range of staff, including subject leaders, and pupils from Year 7 to Year 13. Together with the vice-principal, he visited lessons in a range of subjects. The inspector talked informally with pupils during breaks and lunchtimes.

Context

Since the last inspection, there have been a small number of changes to staffing. A new leader of the primary phase was appointed in April 2019. The vice-principal responsible for teaching and learning left the school in August 2019. The principal promoted a number of staff to a wider senior leadership group. A new designated safeguarding leader (DSL) was appointed in August 2019. The school is in the final stages of closing the sixth-form provision.

The progress made by the school in tackling the key areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection

Following the previous inspection, leaders and governors acted quickly and revised the school's policy of managing allegations against staff (MAAS) to ensure it complies with statutory guidance. They took all necessary actions and made appropriate referrals to external agencies. Any allegations against staff since the previous inspection have been investigated thoroughly and evidence has been recorded robustly. School leaders are now working closely with the local authority, through comprehensive safeguarding reviews, to ensure that systems and procedures follow legal requirements.

Since the last inspection, governors have appointed a new, experienced, non-teaching DSL to strengthen the school's culture of safeguarding. The new leader reviewed all aspects of safeguarding and surveyed pupils' views. A number of 'safe spaces' have been introduced where pupils can go if they have any concerns. An adult is always there for pupils to talk to and get advice and support. Leaders have restructured the roles of support staff to include two full-time non-teaching roles to strengthen the well-being provision for students in Years 10 and 11. This provision now incorporates an in-house counselling service, in-house mental health support and anger management support. The number of cases recorded of pupils using the

'safe spaces' has increased since the last inspection, reflecting the increasing confidence of pupils in talking to staff.

Leaders have provided appropriate training for staff to emphasise the crucial role of the form tutor in making pupils feel safe. Pupils' planners have been amended and safeguarding posters have been introduced around the school to make it clearer to pupils whom they can go to if they are worried. The DSL has attended assemblies for all year groups to introduce herself. A new Bradford Girls' Grammar School safeguarding pupil committee has been set up, which meets weekly with the DSL and improves awareness of different safeguarding topics across the whole school. Regular safeguarding newsletters to pupils and staff ensure that all members of the school community are up to date with the latest safeguarding advice and guidance. Consequently, pupils know who the safeguarding leaders in the school are. Pupils spoken to during the inspection value highly the work and availability of the new designated safeguarding leader.

The DSL works closely with the site manager and the local authority to ensure that the school site is secure. Regular fire drills take place and are carefully recorded and reviewed. A lockdown drill has been carried out and reviewed. As a result, pupils know what to do in the case of an emergency.

Following the examination results in August 2019, leaders were disappointed that the outcomes of students in the sixth form did not improve compared with the previous year. Since the last inspection, leaders offered a wider choice of subjects to students applying to join the sixth form, including additional courses in drama, law and sociology. However, the uptake was too small to make these courses financially viable and as a result, the curriculum has not been broadened.

Since the last inspection, leaders have focused on improving the quality of teaching in the sixth form. The assistant principal with an overview of the sixth-form provision is ambitious and committed to improving the sixth form further. Leaders evaluated the quality of the sixth-form provision and identified the correct areas for improvement. For example, visits to lessons and scrutiny of students' work indicated to leaders that the application of knowledge and students' evaluation skills needed strengthening. Departments worked collaboratively to strengthen these areas of the curriculum. However, leaders know that there is still variation in the appropriateness of tasks teachers use to implement the curriculum. Leaders also acknowledge that questioning used by some teachers is not effective in identifying students' gaps in knowledge.

The sixth-form leader regularly checks students' views on the quality of the provision. There are regular opportunities for students to catch up after school, for example during workshops. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong and they support students well. Students feel confident and comfortable to approach their teachers if they are unsure about their learning.

The effectiveness of leadership and management at the school

Since the last inspection in March 2019, the principal and vice-principal have made a positive start in tackling weaknesses identified in the previous report. They moved quickly to address safeguarding concerns and to produce an action plan that clearly identifies the improvements they want to see. There are clear signs that leaders are having a positive impact and are bringing about necessary improvements.

Safeguarding arrangements are now effective and in line with legal requirements. Since March 2019, leaders have quickly amended policies and procedures to ensure the rapid improvement of safeguarding arrangements. They have reviewed the way allegations against staff are managed and investigated, and, as a result, information held is comprehensive and actions taken are appropriate. The school works closely with the local authority to ensure that the school site is secure and risk assessments of trips and visits follow statutory guidance.

A new designated safeguarding leader has been appointed. She is knowledgeable and vigilant. Safeguarding leaders have refreshed their training with the support of the local authority. Staff receive up-to-date training, including on the 'Prevent' duty and county lines. They understand their responsibility to be vigilant in keeping pupils safe, know the signs to look out for and know how to share information in a timely and appropriate way.

Pupils feel safe in school and know there is a trusted adult they can go to if they are worried. They are given relevant information and guidance on how they can keep themselves safe both in school and online. Leaders work closely with external agencies to ensure that early help is offered to pupils and their families as and when the need arises. Safeguarding concerns identified at the previous inspection have now been addressed.

Staff work well together and feel well supported by leaders. Staff value the training they receive in order to deliver the school's ambitious curriculum. Staff value the way leaders consider their workload and morale is high. The newly introduced staff forum has improved communication between staff and leaders, and staff feel they can approach any leader if they have concerns.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Senior leaders are ambitious and want the school to improve. They are clear about their roles in improving the school.
- The newly appointed designated safeguarding leader has strengthened significantly the culture of safeguarding in the school. There are clear procedures in place to ensure that the school site is secure.

- Leaders now manage any allegations against staff robustly and follow statutory guidance.
- Pupils feel safe in school and know whom to go to if they have any concerns.
- Staff feel well supported and value the consideration leaders give to their workload.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Despite leaders' attempts to offer additional courses to sixth-form students, the curriculum has not been broadened. The school is in the final stages of closing the sixth-form provision.
- In some sixth-form subjects, for example mathematics, the tasks chosen by some teachers are not always appropriate for the content they are trying to deliver and consequently do not meet the needs of all students. Questioning is not always used effectively enough to identify any gaps in students' knowledge.

External support

Since the last inspection, the local authority has provided effective support to the school in a number of areas and is having a positive impact on the school's improvement. The safeguarding team from the local authority has conducted full safeguarding reviews and has provided advice and guidance to school leaders around the management of allegations against staff and risk management of school trips and visits. The local authority has also provided scrutiny of the security of the school site and safeguarding training to designated safeguarding leaders and governors.