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Mr Thomas Maltby
Headteacher
The Hollyfield School and Sixth Form Centre
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Dear Mr Maltby

No formal designation inspection of The Hollyfield School and Sixth Form Centre

Following my visit with Ofsted Inspectors Katerina Christodoulou, Ian Morris and Anne Turner to your school on 7 to 8 November 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This 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 aspects of the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school and the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils at the school.

Evidence

During the inspection, inspectors visited classrooms in all year groups and most subjects, registration sessions, sixth-form independent study periods, the library and an assembly. Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school, including at breaktimes and lunchtimes. We held meetings with: school leaders; representatives of the governing body and the trust; groups of staff and pupils; and a member of the Metropolitan Police Safer Schools team. We held conversations with staff and pupils around the school. We scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including records relating to pupils' behaviour, attendance and safeguarding, including the single central record. We took into account the responses from staff, parents and carers to surveys carried out by the school. We also noted the responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, completed by parents in recent years.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

You took up the post of headteacher in September 2017. The school is one of two secondary schools that formed a multi-academy trust one year ago. You work closely with the chief executive officer of the trust, who was headteacher of the school at the time of the previous inspection in April 2016.

The school is slightly larger than the average-sized secondary school, with 1,048 pupils on roll. The numbers joining the school in Year 7 have increased each year since the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average. The proportion of pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium funding is slightly less than average. An above average proportion of pupils receive support because they have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities or have an education health and care plan. Just over half the pupils represent White British heritage. Overall, pupils represent a wide range of ethnic backgrounds.

You have created and stabilised a newly structured leadership team. Leaders are committed to, and are successful in, sustaining the high standards seen at the previous inspection. You have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Leaders have taken appropriate actions, applying clear, well-founded strategies when improvements have been needed.

Leaders, including governors, respond appropriately to evaluations of the school's work. You recognised when some pupils' attitudes to their learning and their overall experience of school was not as positive as it should be. The levels of some pupils' absence and exclusion, and the incidence of low-level disruption were too high. You rightly consulted staff and have responded to their concerns. As a result, leaders have revised the behaviour policy. You have a clear rationale for the policy and a vision for a shift in the culture and ethos of the school, to nurture a more inclusive approach to the school's behaviour policy and practice. Leaders expect a more collective responsibility from staff and pupils to ensure improved behaviour, based on mutual respect and leaders' raised expectations. You launched the new policy in September 2018.

Pupils generally behave well in lessons and around the school. They are respectful towards each other and their teachers. They were polite and welcoming to the inspection team, willingly engaging in conversations and articulating their views clearly and sensibly.

The atmosphere in most lessons is calm and productive. Pupils focus on their work because they are motivated and ambitious. Teachers nurture a mutually respectful learning environment in which pupils are keen to complete tasks purposefully and to discuss their work with each other. Pupils are responsive to their teachers' expectations for attentiveness.

Sixth-form students appreciate opportunities to take on additional responsibilities. For example, they help with duties in the library and at lunchtime. They are mentors for younger pupils. Their mature and sensible attitude to their studies means they are positive role models.

The revised behaviour policy includes greater emphasis on the issuing of rewards, and pupils are responding well to this. Leaders have well-organised systems in place to monitor how well teachers are implementing the policy. For example, leaders' records show that more pupils are receiving rewards; incidents of poor behaviour are decreasing. However, while there are clear stages stipulated in the policy about when pupils should receive warnings and sanctions for poor behaviour, there is some variation in the extent to which teachers use these effectively. In the few cases when teachers' expectations are not high enough, pupils' behaviour becomes unsettled. Pupils are distracted with conversations and, in a few cases, this escalates to rudeness to their teachers. There are too many occasions when pupils' non-compliance with the school's policies about uniform and chewing gum are not challenged by their teachers.

There is therefore some inconsistency in how well teachers are upholding leaders' expectations of pupils' behaviour. This is partly a function of the new behaviour policy, introduced this academic year, being in its early stages. Leaders are clear on the next steps to ensure that the policy is embedded across the school. This rightly includes seeking further feedback from pupils, staff and parents, as well as additional training and reiteration of leaders' intentions that underlie the policy.

Leaders have also implemented and adapted swiftly a range of procedures and routines in response to the feedback they sought from staff regarding pupils' behaviour. For example, there is a higher profile of senior staff on duty, and they are available to support colleagues with more challenging classes. The reporting and detention systems are more streamlined and purposeful. These changes have been effective in enabling pupils to improve their behaviour more rapidly. Staff feel they are supported well and leaders follow up any training needs appropriately.

There is a well-established and experienced safeguarding team that ensures staff are up to date with latest requirements and contemporary safeguarding concerns. Leaders are alert to local risks for pupils and liaise well with outside agencies, including the police, to provide pupils with appropriate guidance. Recent work with the Metropolitan Police Safer Schools team, including the running of a citizenship day, is an example of the school's strong collaboration with external organisations to further promote pupils' health and well-being.

Similarly, the systems for monitoring attendance are very well organised and effective. Leaders' actions to help pupils improve their attendance and punctuality mean that these continue to improve, especially for disadvantaged pupils.

Leaders, including governors, are scrutinising the impact of different interventions and are mindful of specific circumstances that lead to individual pupils having poor attendance and punctuality. There is a recently expanded pastoral team to ensure that pupils receive the support they need. The Restart Centre is a source of the intensive support that some pupils need to improve their engagement with their learning. Pupils clearly benefit from a personalised curriculum, including work experience, to enable them to gain qualifications and pursue their interests and career aspirations. The number of exclusions has dropped substantially as a result of these interventions.

The school site presents some challenges to safety given its layout and ongoing building developments. There are well-established routines for staff supervision of pupils at breaktimes. There is a positive rapport between pupils from different year groups, and with staff. Pupils generally respond well when reminded of expectations. They are appreciative of staff being readily at hand. Pupils wholeheartedly state that they feel safe in school and have someone to go to if they have any worries. The very large majority of parents who responded to a survey carried out recently by the school agreed that their child feels safe at school.

Leaders have rightly identified aspects of the school environment that have been especially problematic in ensuring pupils' orderly conduct and have taken appropriate steps to improve these. For example, they have fitted an all-weather surface to provide a safer and more accessible year-round area where pupils can socialise at breaktimes. Pupils appreciate this area and use it well. Similarly, while some pupils note the canteen as an aspect of the school they would like to improve, leaders are changing arrangements for lunchtime. In the meantime, pupils cope very well with the restricted space. They interact positively in the canteen so that it is a pleasant and sociable environment where pupils chat and play card games as well as have their meals.

Leaders ensure that health and safety checks are undertaken regularly and formally. Governors have recently taken steps to improve the quality of reporting of health and safety matters. However, there is no recorded evidence of weekly site inspections; nor are risk assessments sufficiently robust or well organised. This needs to be addressed, and the roles and responsibilities for this vital work clarified, as a matter of urgency.

Leaders' aspirations for the impact of the behaviour policy are ambitious and based on the successful model already established in the trust. However, there are a few pupils who remain unclear, and some staff who need more training, on the potential and benefits of the restorative approach advocated.

External support

The leadership team is supported very well by the trust, with routine opportunities for the sharing of good practice and staff development. You liaise productively with the local authority and a range of outside agencies with regard to the welfare and well-being of pupils.

Priorities for further improvement

- Leaders must ensure that the administration of health and safety records is fit for purpose.
- Leaders must determine and apply the most effective communications and training to ensure that there is a collective commitment to embedding the behaviour policy across the school in order that pupils' behaviour continues to improve.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, 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 Kingston upon Thames. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Carter-Fraser
Her Majesty's Inspector