

Serco Inspections
20 Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T: 01216 799164
Direct email: tim.ogbourn@serco.com

27 June 2013

Dr P Kent
Headteacher
Lawrence Sheriff School
Clifton Road
Rugby
Warwickshire
CV21 3AG

Dear Dr Kent

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Lawrence Sheriff School

Following my visit with Marilyn Mottram, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 27 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because the Chief Inspector was concerned about the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the school. We sought to establish:

- whether safeguarding procedures are adequate
- how effectively the school prevents and tackles bullying
- whether supervision is appropriate to keep students safe in lessons and at break times during the school day
- whether students interact appropriately with each other during unstructured times of the day
- whether there is thorough recording and follow up action to any incidents that occur, and appropriate communication with parents
- whether staff are suitably trained and able to seek advice and support when required
- the effectiveness of leaders and the governing body in monitoring and evaluating the policy and practice for behaviour management and safeguarding within the school.

Context

No Year 11 students were in school during the day of the inspection because they have completed their public examinations. Year 12 students were present for the first part of the day, during which time I met with a group of them. They spent the rest of the day visiting Aston University. A small group of students were taking part in a Duke of Edinburgh expedition away from the school site.

Evidence

My colleague and I scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements, behaviour and bullying. We looked at curriculum documents to explore how well the school teaches students about diversity and discussed these with staff. We met with you and other senior leaders, a group of eight staff, and four groups of students from Years 7 to 10 and Year 12. During break and lunchtime we spoke to many students informally, and observed the playground, field and dining room. We visited parts of seven lessons. A member of the governing body came into school to talk to us and I had a phone conversation with a representative of the local authority.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

You, your senior team and your staff place a strong emphasis on the importance of students behaving respectfully towards each other. Students understand this expectation well and are very clear about what it means in their day-to-day school life. They try hard to reach the standards of behaviour that you and your colleagues expect from them. The students we spoke to during the day gave a positive account of what behaviour in school is typically like. They were adamant that racism is totally unacceptable and that neither racist acts nor racist language happen in school. Students were also very clear that any kind of teasing, bullying or discrimination on the basis of individual difference is unacceptable. They believe that any homophobic language is always challenged by staff in lessons, although is sometimes heard at unstructured times. Older students felt that the way in which staff speak to students helps them to develop a mature attitude to their studies and to each other.

During the inspection, students behaved calmly, considerately and sensibly at all times. They were responsible and independent and had positive attitudes towards each other. In the lessons observed, students listened well to staff and worked very co-operatively with each other. In several lessons, students were working in groups or pairs, which they did maturely and with a good level of focus on their work. In one lesson, a large class of Year 9 students were asked to move into groups, which they did instantly. In all the lessons observed students were well-focused on their learning.

Behaviour at unstructured times was equally positive. At breaktime, seven different football or rugby games were taking place on the field, and students showed a good awareness of the need to give each other enough space to play. Other students stood or sat and chatted with each other at various places around the school. At lunchtime, the picture was very similar. Quiet spaces are available indoors for students who want to study or be away from others. The dining room was also orderly – students queued and chatted together. As students changed lessons they moved sensibly. A few who spoke to us said that occasionally they feel jostled by older students but that generally this is not a problem. Unstructured times were well supervised by staff.

All students were able to explain what they would do if they were being bullied. They had a wide range of staff to whom they could turn, and it is a strength of the school's work that they would not all choose to talk to the same person – some would choose a subject teacher, others a pastoral leader, others would speak to you directly. Several students gave examples of where they had experienced an incident that had upset them. Almost all of them had sought help from staff so that the incident was resolved. Students emphasised that the pastoral leadership is particularly effective at dealing with bullying. One noted, 'I know that pastoral staff deal with these scenarios well and often put time and thought into solving such issues.'

The vertical tutor group system is popular with the students. Many younger students said that it makes them feel safer and more included in school, because they know older students and can ask them for help if they need to.

Fixed-term exclusion is hardly ever used. There have been no permanent exclusions from the school for many years. You strongly believe that students are with you 'for the journey.' Attendance is high and very few students are persistently absent.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The values on which all of the school's work is based are very clear. You believe that students should be happy at the school, which in turn will help them to be academically successful, and you convey this to parents and to students from the outset. As a result of this philosophy and all the policies and practices that are linked to it, the school is a harmonious community where students with different needs can thrive, achieve highly in their academic work and enjoy a wide range of enrichment opportunities.

The school's procedures to safeguard students are very strong. Robust checks are made on new staff at all levels. Safeguarding training is wide-ranging and senior leaders ensure that all staff complete it. The school deals rigorously with any child protection issues that do arise and involves the local authority and social services for advice as appropriate. Clear records are kept of incidents and follow-up actions.

The school takes a considered and responsive approach to preventing and dealing with bullying and more minor undesirable behaviours. Incidents are dealt with on an individual basis. Senior leaders may involve parents or carers, help the students to resolve an incident between them, issue a punishment, or a combination of any of these. The recent survey carried out by one of the senior leaders has helpfully highlighted the incidents that occur most frequently and have helped students to reflect on incidents that may seem minor to one person and upsetting to another. This forms a firm basis for further work on this important aspect of school life. Clear records are kept of any bullying incidents, and the actions taken are clearly logged and followed up, although the follow-up actions are not noted on the overview log. The quality of the written bullying and behaviour management policies does not fully reflect the school's very strong work in these areas.

The school is very aware that although all their students are academically able, they all have different social and emotional needs. Support for students who find it more difficult to settle into the school, or to socialise, is well-tailored to their individual needs.

The governor who leads on this area of work is well informed, and governors discuss safeguarding, bullying and relevant actions in their meetings as a matter of course. Other governors use their professional skills and knowledge to advise the school on any issues that arise. The governing body would benefit from receiving the school's detailed information about bullying incidents.

External support

The local authority has a good knowledge of the school and its strengths in relation to safeguarding and students' behaviour. They have provided responsive and appropriate support when the school has needed to seek help about specific child protection issues.

Priorities for further improvement

- Consider revising the behaviour and bullying policies so that they reflect the school's very clear, positive values, and convey these in writing both to students and to parents and carers.
- Record on the overview log the follow-up to actions taken as a result of any bullying incidents, and share the overview with governors.
- Maintain the good work that you have already done to enable students to recognise differences between banter and play and actions that hurt or offend, so that this is always in the forefront of students' minds.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Warwickshire, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Secretary of State for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Morris-King

Her Majesty's Inspector

cc Chair of the Governing Body

