

## PROTECT-INSPECTION

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4 April 2014

Miss Lesley Broadway  
Interim Principal  
Black Country UTC  
Vernon Way  
Sneyd Lane  
Bloxwich  
Walsall  
West Midlands  
WS3 2PA

Dear Miss Broadway

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Black Country UTC**

Following my visit to your school on 3 April 2014, 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 behaviour and safety of students identified in the school's last section 5 report and published data related to students' behaviour and attendance.

### **Evidence**

I considered a range of evidence including:

- observations of students' behaviour throughout the day
- scrutiny of documentation related to students' behaviour and safety
- discussions with leaders, staff and students.

Having considered all of the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the **behaviour and safety of students requires improvement.**

**Context**

This is a University Technology College (UTC) with specialisms in engineering and science and has Walsall College as its lead sponsor. It is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school. Students join in either Year 10 or Year 12 from a range of schools in the local area. About 80% of students are boys. There is a broadly average proportion of students currently in the school known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportions of students supported at school action and school action plus stage are broadly average. There is a smaller than average number of students with a statement of special educational needs.

You were appointed as Interim Principal in January 2014 having previously been the Assistant Principal. The Chair of the Governing Body took up her role in September 2013. A decision is imminent with regards to the relocation of the school to the centre of Walsall.

**Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students' behaviour is not yet good because there is too much variability in the extent to which they show positive attitudes to learning in lessons. This is largely because not all teaching interests and engages students; the students I spoke to can very clearly make this link.

Students' behaviour that requires improvement in lessons has some common features. These include some students' lethargic and uninterested attitudes to the subjects they are studying, which lead to no sense of urgency to complete the tasks they have been given. I observed no major disruption to lessons because of poor behaviour but did observe pockets of low-level disruption and some passive resistance to learn or develop knowledge and skills. For example, I observed students in Years 10 and 11 lessons staring blankly at computer screens, talking to each other rather than completing work and, on one occasion, a student listening to music because he said he had, 'no idea of what to do and so might as well listen to music'.

Conversely, when behaviour was good in lessons, students listened carefully to explanations and instructions and settled quickly and purposefully to tasks set when working on their own or in groups. The characteristics of good behaviour I observed also include students being respectful towards each other and their teachers, and actively helping each other to provide solutions to problems. The behaviour of students I observed in sixth-form lessons was always at least good, and sometimes outstanding.

I observed good conduct of the students around the school building. They moved sensibly and arrived punctually to lessons. The atmosphere in the canteen at break and lunchtimes was calm with students queuing in an orderly manner for their food, chatting to their friends and staff while eating and tidying up when they had

finished. The canteen staff confirmed that the behaviour I observed was typical. Only a few boys went outside at lunchtime and they behaved well.

My observations broadly match the views of the students and staff with whom I spoke. Older students talked about behaviour being much better than in the past, particularly in this academic year. All of the students I spoke to also described increased expectations of behaviour since January. Many students attributed this to your leadership as Interim Principal because, they said, you are 'strict but will listen and try to find a solution rather than just telling us off'. The school's evidence supports this improving picture of behaviour: the numbers of fixed-term exclusions have more than halved in comparison to the same period of time last year, and a relatively small number of students have been in 'isolation' since September. However, both staff and students spoke of continued inconsistency in how teachers manage behaviour in lessons. The recently introduced 'behaviour ladders' are making some difference but I observed teachers not following the processes. Teachers and students are aware that this inconsistency is both unfair and also unhelpful to promoting good behaviour in all classrooms.

Students explained to me that they feel safe in school. This is because there is at least one member of staff that they can go to for help if needed. Another reason is because almost all of the students I spoke to are convinced that any bullying that occurs is dealt with well and quickly. Leaders could talk in detail about what action had been taken to tackle bullying, including substantial work with parents or carers; however, the written records do not accurately reflect this level of support. Incidences of bullying are recorded but the analysis of patterns and trends requires improvement.

In the past, too many students known to be eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs have been excluded in comparison to their classmates. This has reduced considerably this year. However, the school's analysis of patterns and reasons for exclusions and for different groups of students is not good. This is also the case for the analysis of behaviour trends for internal sanctions. Therefore, leaders are unable to capture what is working well while at the same time identifying aspects of the school's management of behaviour that needs to be improved.

The school's records indicate that students' attendance has improved considerably so far this year. Comparisons with the same period last year show an increase of four percentage points overall and the attendance of Years 10 and 11 students is at approximately 93%. While this figure is still below average, it is the highest rate of attendance since the UTC opened. Records also show that the number of students who are frequently absent from school has declined from previous years. The attendance and frequent absence of students in Years 12 and 13 remains a concern. You explained to me the measures that you and your team are taking to tackle this by emphasising to students the links between high levels of attendance and good achievement, and by paying for additional time from the local authority's educational

welfare service. These measures are beginning to have an impact but there is more to do.

**Priorities for further improvement**

- Improve students' attitudes to learning in Years 10 and 11 by making sure that all teaching engages, interests and enthuses students.
- Eradicate inconsistencies in the ways in which teachers manage poor behaviour and promote good behaviour in lessons.
- Tackle poor attendance, particularly in Years 12 and 13, by strengthening students' understanding between the impact of high levels of attendance and good achievement.
- Improve the school's analysis of trends of behaviour, and of different groups of students' behaviour, so that successful strategies can be shared and embedded and action taken to address weaknesses.
- Standardise the school's approach to recording and analysing bullying incidents so that leaders have a clearer understanding of any patterns which can then be addressed quickly.

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

Yours sincerely

James McNeillie

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

cc            Chair of the Governing Body