

Serco Inspections
Colmore Plaza
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: 0121 679 9161
Direct E: ann.morris@serco.com

Mr Michael Astley
Vice-Principal
Hagley Park Academy
Burnthill Lane
Rugeley
WS15 2HZ

Dear Mr Astley

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Hagley Park Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 11 July 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 the 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 academy's last section 5 report and published data related to students' behaviour and attendance, particularly for students eligible for free school meals.

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

Hagley Park Academy is smaller than most other secondary schools. It became a sponsor-led academy in September 2011. The sponsor is the Creative Education Academies Trust (CEAT), whose mission is 'to promote the improvement of educational opportunity for young people in the UK and to enhance the role of

design in schools'. The academy forms part of the Rugeley Academies, which serve the town of Rugeley, together with its neighbour and partner, Fair Oak Academy. Almost all students are White British. An average proportion of students are eligible for support from the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government, mainly for students known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after in public care). The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported at school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.

Since the school's Section 5 inspection in April 2013 an Assistant Principal has left the academy. A new Assistant Principal with responsibility for teaching and achievement has been in post since September 2013. During the inspection some mathematics and science lessons were being taken by cover staff.

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. In too many lessons, particularly in classes containing less able younger students, off task behaviour detracts from learning. This is usually because teaching does not engage students sufficiently and behaviour is not managed well enough.

Weaknesses in teaching sometimes mean that students work too slowly and chat about things unrelated to the lesson content. Year 7 students spoke about the fact they experience some lessons where 'kids mess about because the lessons are boring and because some teachers do not deal with the poor behaviour'. Students think this happens a lot with cover staff and in lessons containing less able younger students.

During my visit, students' attitudes to learning varied, reflecting the comments made by students. Positive attitudes to learning were evident in English lessons but in other subjects instances were seen of students being apathetic and disinterested in their learning. In some lessons, particularly at Key Stage 3, levels of concentration were low because work was not sufficiently well matched to students' different abilities. The pace of learning slowed because opportunities were missed to recognise the achievements of students in lessons. In some lessons pupils did not receive enough praise for their efforts and not enough attention was given to ensuring students know by the end of the lessons what they had learnt. These weaknesses in teaching contributed to less positive attitudes.

Students' attitudes to learning were more positive where the academy's reward system was used: for instance, students' concentration levels rose noticeably in a music lesson when the teacher started to award merits for effective responses to her questions about Samba music. The behaviour seen in English lessons was consistently good. In all of these classes, students appeared to be unaware of my

presence because they were absorbed in their learning. In each of these classrooms the outcomes for different ability groups were clearly stated and students listened very carefully because at any point the teacher might ask them a pertinent question. This was in marked contrast to other lessons where students were observed chatting about things unrelated to the lesson content. When I asked them why they did this one student said 'the work was too easy so we can chat about other things and still complete our work'.

Students in the sixth form reported that they receive very regular feedback on how well they are doing and that this was helping them make progress towards achieving their challenging targets. These students appreciate the range of experiences that contribute to their personal development. This includes opportunities to undertake work experience and voluntary work. They correctly think they can contribute more to the academy through supporting younger students; for instance, through mentoring younger students and by developing stronger links between the sixth form and the council that represents students in the main academy.

Student behaviour around the academy at the start of the day, at break and lunch times is thoughtful and considerate. The academy is an orderly place. Some older students go out of their way to check that younger students feel safe in the academy. The start of lessons, after morning break are sometimes delayed because of the distances students have to walk to get to their lessons. Although there is a warning bell in the academy this cannot be heard by many students who are outside. All students wear the school uniform so they look reasonably smart, although many would like to change to a 'much smarter blazer'.

Students have access to a very large campus but students generally feel safe because staff are diligent in undertaking their supervision duties and students are reassured by the existence of CCTV. However, Year 7 students spoke about feeling less secure at times because the campus is so big and because some older students are not always considerate. The plans you have to increase the access younger students have to spaces reserved purely for their use would appear to be well judged. Students have the opportunity to influence decision-making and contribute to academy improvement through representatives on a council. However, this group is not well known enough to the large majority of students and is therefore not able to effectively consider any concerns students might have.

Students indicated that bullying is rare and that it is dealt with quickly when it occurs. Students have an awareness of the many forms that bullying can take; for instance, that linked to social media and name-calling linked to possible racism. Older students do not fully appreciate that homo-phobic name-calling is wrong.

Generally, students cope well with the limited space that is available for eating lunches. The weather was good during my visit so some students could eat outside. Despite the lack of space, students behaved responsibly and there was a pleasant

and civilised atmosphere. However, comments made by students and the lunchtime manager confirmed that this provision is not ideal when the weather is bad. Again, it was reassuring to hear about the plans you have to improve this provision by providing a larger covered area. In addition, your plans to introduce a cashless system for academy lunches would appear to be an improvement on the current system in which students eligible for free school meals have to show a special pass.

You are keeping records about all behaviour incidents. These records confirm what students told me, namely that behaviour is improving. Although the overall figures remain on the high side there are fewer incidents of poor behaviour, including exclusions. You are raising expectations about the behaviour you require. Your behaviour records, including your regular assessments of students' attitudes, is giving you important insights into how well the academy meets the needs of different groups of students. Disabled students and those with special educational needs behave and attend as well as other students. Whilst the academy does very well with the few students that are in public care, there remains more to do in effectively meeting the needs of those that are eligible for free school meals. A disproportionate number of these students have been involved in behaviour incidents. You have correctly recognised that this evidence, combined with the information about their achievement, mean that improvements to the provision for these students is an urgent priority for the academy. You presented evidence during the inspection suggesting strong progress is being made correcting this situation.

Attendance has risen and is very close to the national average, although students eligible for free school meals do not attend quite as well. An emphasis on rewards plus more effective follow-up has noticeably improved attendance, particularly for those students who have been persistently absent in the recent past. Attendance at the sixth form is 94%, a rise of 7% on the previous year. Your success in improving attendance has resulted in the academy having to meet the needs of more students with less positive attitudes to learning who are now more regularly attending the academy. A strength of your approach to managing behaviour is the emphasis you are giving to the importance of improving students' attitudes to learning. To achieve this you have made teaching a top priority and have developed an effective rewards system that has credibility with students. Students take great pride in gaining these rewards.

You have recognised that there are inconsistencies in how teachers manage behaviour and that some staff have been over-reliant on support from other staff. Students remarked about the variations in how staff handle behaviour and were particularly critical of a minority of staff that do not effectively challenge poor behaviour. The current approach lacks clear stages that can be implemented by teachers in the classroom. In recognition of this, your plan to introduce a new approach from September that builds on some of the existing good practice in the academy would appear to be appropriate.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the behaviour and attitudes to learning of students eligible for free school meals by ensuring that learning activities are well matched to students' abilities.
- extend the accommodation available at lunchtimes, particularly when the weather is bad.
- ensure students better understand homo-phobic bullying and that this is wrong
- ensure the academy council has a higher profile so this more effectively allows students to communicate any concerns
- develop further the role of sixth form students in the main academy.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Staffordshire, the Chair of the Governing Body, and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Sheldrick

Her Majesty's Inspector

cc Chair of the Governing Body
The Principal of the Rugeley Academies
Creative Education Academies Trust