

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 9153
Direct E: naik.sandhu@serco.com

15 July 2014

Mr David Stephenson
Principal
Plume School
Fambridge Road
Maldon
Essex
CM9 6AB

Dear Mr Stephenson

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Plume School

Following my visit to your school on 15 July, 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 to examine behaviour at the academy. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve behaviour.

Evidence

I gathered a range of evidence including:

- observations of students' behaviour and their attitudes to learning in lessons
- observations of students' behaviour throughout the day, including discussion with students
- scrutiny of documentary evidence
- discussions with leaders and staff.

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

Behaviour and safety are good.

Context

The Plume School is a much larger-than-average secondary converter academy with a sixth form. Students are overwhelmingly White British; the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language, and the proportion from ethnic minorities, are both well below the national average. The proportion of students who are eligible for the pupil premium (extra government funding to support particular groups of students) is below average. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs at school action is broadly average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The proportion of students who join or leave the academy other than at the usual transfer times is lower than in most secondary schools.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The academy provides a safe environment; students report feeling safe in all areas of the site during lessons, break periods, and on their journeys to and from school. Students move around the site calmly, respect the academy's facilities, and enjoy good relationships with teachers, other adults and each-other. They are polite and helpful, and welcome visitors to the academy with pride. There is very little litter or graffiti in evidence. Students arrive at lessons promptly, almost invariably with the equipment they need to engage with their learning, and a positive attitude. They report that both bullying of all kinds, and the use of unacceptable language, are very rare. This is confirmed by the academy's own monitoring information. Leaders, and most teachers, reinforce high expectations concerning conduct around the academy consistently, including through the academy's clear behaviour policy, and do not tolerate poor behaviour. None was observed during this inspection.

Pastoral leaders work hard to ensure that individuals who find it difficult to manage their behaviour stay at the academy and receive support, sometimes working in isolation, so that they do not cause repeated disruption to the learning of others. Because of this, rates of temporary exclusion, though slightly above the national average, have continued to decline over the course of this academic year. Attendance has increased considerably over the same period, and is above the national average. This is because leaders have taken effective steps to minimise absence, particularly persistent absence, working with outside agencies effectively, and using fixed penalty notices and other means to underline the importance of regular attendance. The attendance of those who are eligible for the pupil premium, although improving, remains below that of other students.

Students indicate that behaviour within lessons is almost always good – as was the case during this inspection. This is supported by the academy's monitoring data, which also indicates substantial reductions in the incidence of low-level disruption during the present academic year. Students' books indicate that, over time, the great majority complete work to the best of their ability, and take a pride in it. The academy's reward system also helps to motivate many students. Arrangements to cover the work of teachers who are absent are effective in promoting good behaviour and progress. In some lessons a few sometimes disrupt the learning of others. Usually, teachers respond quickly to this, so that interruptions to learning are brief. When teachers do not, or fail to follow the academy's behaviour policy, disruption sometimes continues.

Priorities for further improvement

- Increase further the attendance of those students eligible for the pupil premium
- Ensure that all teachers follow the academy's behaviour policies, so that disruptive behaviour is tackled quickly, reducing the need to place students in isolation, or to temporarily exclude them from school.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Essex, to the Secretary of State for Education, 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

Jason Howard
Her Majesty's Inspector