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16 July 2014

Miss Karen Castrey  
Headteacher  
Sandon Business and Enterprise College  
Sandon Road  
Meir  
Stoke-on-Trent  
Staffordshire  
ST3 7DF

Dear Miss Castrey

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Sandon Business and Enterprise College**

Following my visit to your school on 15 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 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about behaviour at the school.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors considered evidence including:

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

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

## **Context**

This is an average-sized secondary school. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is much lower than average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language. There is a well-above average proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of students supported at school action is below average. The proportions of students who are supported at school action plus and those who have a statement of special educational needs are similar to the national average. The school has its own support area, called the Learning Support Centre/Reflection Room, for students who are at risk of exclusion and provision for students who require additional learning support.

The school uses a wide range of alternative provision to tailor the curriculum to meet individual students' needs. This includes provision from Stoke-on-Trent College, Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College, Keele University, Staffordshire University and REACH 3 and 4. The numbers of students who leave or join school at different times of the year are higher than average. The school has some difficulty recruiting staff in the core subjects of mathematics and science, although many staff remain with the school for a long period of time.

On the day of the inspection, some students in Year 7 were on a day visit to London, some Year 9 students were at camp and some Year 10 students were on work experience. Year 11 students were not in school.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students' behaviour is not yet good, because not all students have a positive attitude to learning or engage with lessons sufficiently well. Students stated that when they were in mixed-ability groups and in lower sets, there was still some low-level disruption and this disrupted the learning of others. They stated that some teaching does not interest them, particularly in mathematics, science and religious education, and that in some lessons teachers did not tackle low-level disruption such as off-task talking. They said that not all cover supervisors knew them well and some students take advantage of this. Under these circumstances their behaviour in lessons does not match the high expectations set by school.

Observations confirmed that behaviour in lessons since the section 5 inspection in May 2013 has improved. In the majority of lessons, staff greeted students and learning began promptly. Students were interested and worked purposefully. In a few classes, boys dominated teachers' questioning and girls paid little attention. Teachers did not always challenge students' behaviour when it was off task, such as drawing on pieces of paper instead of working. In one lesson, the cover supervisor ignored the pockets of talking around the room and remained at the front of the class, concentrating only on those who were answering questions. Students' engagement in learning was better when lessons actively involved students, were carefully structured and had good pace. In lessons where teachers moved around the classroom talking with students and checking on their understanding, students were encouraged to stay on task.

The school's monitoring indicates that the number of call-outs of senior and middle leaders to manage disruptive behaviour have begun to decline. Students are beginning to manage their own behaviour better. Staff are managing challenging behaviour more effectively and using the sanctions in the new behaviour policy more consistently. During observations, staff often missed opportunities to recognise and reward good behaviour and so remind all students of the high standards expected.

The number of permanent and fixed-term exclusions is reducing, particularly in Years 7 and 8. These have dropped significantly, compared with a year ago. Students confirmed that incidents such as fighting were now rare and that the behaviour in Years 7 and 8 had improved. They believe that the presence of a police officer, who is based on site for two days a week as part of the city initiative, is helping to improve standards of behaviour.

The use of the Reflection Room for students with challenging behaviour is helping to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions. Students stated that staff in the Reflection Room work with them well to help them manage their behaviour. The school works effectively with a range of outside agencies to support students with complex needs, for example through anger-management sessions. Students stated that bullying is dealt with swiftly and incidents of bullying are reducing. They stated that learning mentors helped them cope if they had been bullied. The school has tackled rare incidences of homophobic bullying. Students stated bullying and racism were rare and that all staff are willing to listen if students have a problem, including sensitive problems.

Behaviour around the school has improved. All students wear uniform and look smart. The change of school ties to clip-on ones has improved smartness and reduced staff time checking on tidiness. The majority of students are polite and courteous and non-teaching staff commented on this positively. Staff stated that students hold doors open for them and chat confidently with them. Observations of students' behaviour around school confirmed this, particularly at lunchtime in the canteen. Kitchen staff and lunchtime supervisors agreed that behaviour was greatly improved. Students eat lunch unhurriedly and chat sensibly. Staff eating with students supported this pleasant ambience.

High levels of staff supervision were observed before and after school, at breaks and lunchtimes. Supervision was unobtrusive and helped students to feel safe around the school site. The outside area provides few opportunities for students to be unobserved. Students stood around in groups and pairs, talked with staff or each other. Boys played football in a dedicated area. The use of closed-circuit television has improved students' feeling of being safe in the toilets. Good-natured banter was evident amongst staff and students. There is very little litter.

School leaders have improved the consistency of their monitoring of behaviour and attendance. Senior leaders scrutinise behaviour records to identify those students who consistently receive sanctions. They have identified staff who need additional support with managing behaviour. All permanent teaching staff have training on managing behaviour. This is being extended in September to ensure that all cover supervisors understand the school's expectations and act to uphold them.

Attendance is improving and persistent absences have begun to reduce. The school employs a welfare officer to work with families to improve attendance; however the officer does not automatically check on the welfare of all students who have fixed-

term exclusions. Form tutors contact parents as soon as a student is absent. As soon as any student's attendance declines, a postcard warning is sent to parents. Students new to Britain have a member of staff who speaks their home language and contacts families about attendance, if necessary.

Punctuality to lessons is improving. The overwhelming majority of students arrive at school on time. Staff were in evidence at the change of lessons and chivvied students along. Senior staff are aware that occasionally lateness to lessons delays learning and have plans to address this.

The school website makes a wide range of school policies available to parents. The e-safety policy explains how the school teaches students to use technology safely. However, it does not provide sufficient guidance to parents to support them in ensuring that their children use modern technology safely at home.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

Ensure that:

- any incidents of low-level disruptive behaviour are tackled swiftly and so do not interrupt learning
- all staff recognise and reward students' good behaviour
- all students arrive to their lessons on time
- guidance to parents supports them in ensuring that students use e-technology safely at home.

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

Yours sincerely

Michelle Parker

**Her Majesty's Inspector**