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24 October 2014

Mr Steven Pugh
The Executive Headteacher
Burwood School
Avalon Road
Orpington
BR6 9BD

Dear Mr Pugh

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Burwood School

Following my visit to your school on 23 October 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 in response to a complaint made to Ofsted which raised serious concerns. The complaint was deemed to be a qualifying complaint and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Children's Services and Skills decided that an unannounced inspection of the school should take place.

The inspector sought to establish whether:

- safeguarding procedures are adequate, including the response to students' challenging behaviour
- suitable adjustments are made to behaviour management procedures according to students' needs and disabilities
- staff are suitably trained and able to seek advice and support
- school leaders, including the governing body, are effective in monitoring and evaluating policies and practice for behaviour management and safeguarding within the school.

Evidence

The single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements were scrutinised. Attendance records, behaviour incident logs and records reporting the use of physical restraint were also evaluated. A tour of the building was made and a number of short visits to lessons were carried out. Meetings were held with the executive headteacher and other senior leaders. A discussion with the Chair of the Governing Body took place and the minutes of governing body meetings were reviewed. A meeting was held with the Deputy

Director responsible for special educational needs in Bromley local authority.
Informal discussions with staff and students took place throughout the inspection.

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

The school's safeguarding arrangements do not meet requirements.

The quality of leadership and management requires improvement.

Context

Burwood School is a small, special secondary school for boys with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. All boys have a statement of special educational needs. The school has very high levels of mobility and students arrive and leave throughout the year. There are currently 44 boys enrolled at the school. The proportion of students who are entitled to the pupil premium, which is additional funding provided to children in the care of the local authority and students who are eligible for free school meals, is much higher than other schools nationally. The number of boys who are from ethnic minority groups is below that found nationally. All speak English as their first language.

The school was last inspected in June 2013. Since then, the headteacher has resigned and there have been numerous staff and governing body changes. An interim executive headteacher took up his post at the end of September. A new Chair of the Governing Body was appointed last week.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Although staff and students recognise that behaviour has started to improve this term, regular incidents of abusive and challenging behaviour are still occurring. Disruption to lessons is common and learning is interrupted on a regular basis. Teaching is not always pitched at the right level and in many subjects the quality of marking and feedback is poor. As a result, students lose interest and do not make the progress they should. The limited range of subjects offered does not encourage all boys to engage positively with their learning. They therefore spend too much time seeking other distractions and misbehaving. Too many incidents escalate and require the physical intervention of staff. This places staff and students at risk of injury. The police have been called to maintain or restore order on a number of occasions this term. The number of temporary exclusions is still very high as a result of a more assertive response towards poor behaviour this term. However, exclusions have started to reduce over the last few weeks as new systems begin to have an impact.

A new rewards policy has been well received and has led to improvements in behaviour recently. Students recognise that staff are starting to address incidents of poor behaviour in a more consistent manner. They appreciate the incentives they receive for working hard and behaving well. Older boys say that the new headteacher has made a significant difference and the school is a better place to be.

The building is in a poor condition and is a risk to the health and safety of staff and students. Most doors are damaged and no longer close properly as result of vandalism. In some cases this prevents anyone from entering or leaving rooms without assistance. Some fire doors are locked to prevent boys leaving the building without permission. Not all locks work properly and this poses a restriction of liberty in some areas of the building. The outdoor areas are in a better condition, but some boundaries are not secure. These can be easily breached by boys without staff being aware.

The attendance of many boys is a serious cause for concern. Nearly two thirds of boys currently on roll at the school are persistently absent. One third attend for less than half the time they should. Some boys are not attending because they have moved out of the area and are waiting for alternative placements. Some are receiving only part-time home tuition, provided by the local authority, as the school is unable to meet their needs. The school is not recording absence using the correct codes. It does not liaise with other organisations to check that absent students are safe and appropriately supervised.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The revitalised senior leadership team has made a difference in a short space of time. The executive headteacher has an accurate view of what needs to be done and the pace of improvement has quickened since his arrival. The single central record is well maintained and all necessary checks are made on staff before they start work at the school. Appropriate training for staff in safeguarding, physical restraint and de-escalation techniques has been arranged for later this term.

Leaders have ensured that all behaviour concerns, incident logs and records of physical interventions are now accurately recorded and monitored carefully. This has allowed them to check that new interventions are having an impact and identify further areas for improvement. For example, an effective system to monitor reward points shows that most students have improved their attitudes towards learning. However, some students in Year 10 have not responded and further work with this group of students is still needed. Despite recent improvements, long term changes in behaviour and safety have yet to be achieved. This includes improving the quality of teaching so that students engage more positively with their learning.

The governing body has been complacent in accepting what school leaders have told it. The governors have not checked that the information they were given was correct. Consequently, they have an inaccurate picture of the school's overall effectiveness. When concerns have been raised, they have not followed up on them to ensure that necessary improvements were made. The local authority and governing body have not worked well together and, as a result, standards at the school have been allowed to fall. The school building and grounds are poorly maintained and now pose a significant health and safety risk to staff and students. Policies have not been reviewed or updated. For example, the safeguarding policy

does not reflect the statutory guidance issued by the Department for Education in April 2014. Recent changes to the membership of the governing body have yet to have an impact on raising standards.

External support

More support has been provided by the local authority since the resignation of the previous headteacher last term. An external review of the school was commissioned by the local authority in July 2014. This raised significant concerns about the behaviour and safety of students and staff, the quality of teaching and learning, and the capacity of school leaders to make the necessary improvements. Consequently, an interim executive headteacher was appointed in September 2014. A further leader has also been seconded from within the local authority to improve the school's capacity to make improvements.

The local authority designated officer for safeguarding has shared the concerns made in the complaint with governors and school leaders. She is also working with the school to resolve other concerns reported to her this term. The local authority home tuition service is providing alternative education to some boys who were unable to accept the new behaviour systems introduced this term. The school has developed positive working relationships with social care and other agencies. It receives effective support from community police officers and other professional agencies.

Priorities for further improvement

- As a matter of urgency, ensure that necessary repairs are made and appropriate locking systems are installed on doors so that staff and students can move safely around the building.
- Ensure that attendance registers are completed correctly and absence is followed up persistently, so that every student is appropriately supervised and is safe.
- Governors are more robust in monitoring and challenging the information provided to them by school leaders regarding attendance, behavioural incidents and the quality of teaching and learning, so that standards rise.

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

Yours sincerely

Lesley Cox
Her Majesty's Inspector