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No formal designation (behaviour) post-inspection

Patrick Harty  
The Hemel Hempstead School  
Heath Lane  
Hemel Hempstead  
HP1 1TX

Dear Mr Harty

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of The Hemel Hempstead School**

Following my visit to your school on 2 December 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss behaviour at the school.

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 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, including discussion with students
- documentary evidence
- discussions with school leaders and staff.

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

Leaders and managers have taken effective action to maintain the high standards of behaviour and attitudes identified at the school's previous inspection.

### **Context**

The Hemel Hempstead School is a larger than average sized secondary school. Most students are from White British backgrounds. The school has slightly more girls than boys. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average, as is the proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups

and the proportion of students whose first language is believed not to be English are broadly average.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

During the inspection there was a calm and pleasant atmosphere around the school. Students were polite and friendly and happy to talk to me.

Levels of adult supervision for the arrival and departure of students are good. In the mornings all entrances to the school are staffed and students are welcomed. On the day of inspection there were a very small number of late arrivals to school; those who were late followed the school's system for signing in. On departure from the school, staff supervised students in a friendly way while they waited for public transport.

Students take a pride in their appearance and wear the school uniform correctly. Sixth form business dress is smart and they act as good role models for other students. They demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning, their attendance is good and they get on well together.

Students act responsibly when moving around the school. This good behaviour is especially noticeable during the five minute walk from the main school building to lessons held in the music centre. As a result of the time required to move between these buildings, five minute warning bells are sounded and students respond to these quickly. During the inspection students were sensitive to the needs of Year 11 students who were undertaking mock exams and were careful not to disturb them when moving between lessons.

In lessons, students' behaviour is typically good. They arrive punctually and have the right equipment with them. Students are quick to engage in, and have positive attitudes to, learning, responding quickly and appropriately to requests made by staff. The large majority of students talk with enthusiasm about the activities they are completing and work well together, listening respectfully and thoughtfully to adults and their peers.

Students contribute well to their own learning and often show great pride in their work. In some lessons, students' concentration and commitment are exemplary. In a Year 10 art lesson, for example, students were working to develop their coursework. The extremely constructive atmosphere created by the teacher fostered high levels of concentration and excellent behaviour by all students. Students in a Product Design lesson were producing initial ideas for shop front designs. All were highly engaged in their work and extremely focused on making further improvements. They readily accepted the advice of the teacher and appropriately sought the opinions of their peers.

Staff deal promptly and effectively with any low level disruption. They follow the school's successful approach to maintaining good behaviour, including through the use of rewards and consequences. This policy was reviewed and re-launched in September 2014 based on analysis of well-recorded data about students' behaviour. The policy has been reinforced this year. Students have a good understanding of the school's expectations. Most respond positively and are keen to behave well.

However, a few said that staff are not consistent in the use of rewards which is part of the policy.

School tracking shows that the incidents of unacceptable behaviour have been reduced, as have the numbers of incidents of fixed-term exclusions.

Students were very positive about the support they receive from the pastoral team, particularly heads of year. Students who are disabled and have special educational needs value the 'learning centre', which is available to these students throughout the day including at breaks and lunchtimes.

Leaders have rightly focussed on improving students' attendance. More rigorous tracking systems have been introduced. An attendance officer was appointed in September 2013 and this role has been strengthened by the addition of more staff this year. The school's approach is raising parents' awareness of the importance of full attendance, and is supporting students who are at risk of becoming persistent absentees. School data shows that attendance is increasing and is now above the national average. However, there remains some variation between the attendance of different groups.

Lunchtimes and break times are well supervised by adults. However, even when not directly supervised, students behave well. A range of lunchtime activities are provided, for example, football and trampolining. The take-up of these opportunities is good. The serving area for food is very busy, particularly at break time. However, students queue patiently to be served, and, while the dining area is noisy, the atmosphere is a cheerful one.

Students feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe, both in the school and in the wider community. They reported that bullying in the school had previously been a concern. However, they felt that it was now rare, and that when it occurred it was dealt with quickly by staff. Students found the recent 'anti-bullying week' informative and helpful.

During the inspection I took account of Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and used analysis of the school's own survey, based on the Parent View questions. This had been distributed during parents' evenings over the past year and had been completed by 359 parents. The majority of parents agree that school ensures that students are well behaved, that their child is happy at school and that their child feels safe. Although only a small proportion of parents expressed concerns about the school's management of bullying, the school notes the need to share with parents the positive work done around anti-bullying.

The school liaises well with providers of off-site learning, for example, Dacorum Education Support Centre which supports students with behavioural concerns. School leaders check closely the attendance, behaviour, safety and progress of the few students who attend this provision. These students have good levels of attendance and most gain substantially from their placement, as demonstrated by the successful full-time return to school of some.

## **Priorities for further improvement**

- Improve the consistency with which rewards are given. Ensure that students understand how the accumulation of reward points is used and what rewards can be gained, for example, a certificate.
- Ensure that changes made to attendance tracking and procedures are embedded so that the rates of attendance for all groups of students continue to be at least in line with the national average.
- Raise parents' awareness of the school's positive work around anti bullying.

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

Yours sincerely

Mary Rayner  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**