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Huw Derrick
Acting Principal
Ormiston Park Academy
Nethan Drive
Aveley
RM15 4RU

Dear Mr Derrick

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Ormiston Park Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 3 December 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 behaviour at the academy.

Evidence

I considered 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
- documentary evidence
- discussions with academy leaders and staff.

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

Leaders and managers have not taken effective action to maintain the high standards of behaviour and attitudes identified at the school's previous inspection.

Context

Ormiston Park is a small secondary sponsored academy. The proportion of students that are eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding to support disadvantaged students) is above the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is similar to that found nationally. The proportions of students that are disabled or have special educational needs, mostly moderate learning or behaviour, emotional and social difficulties, and those with a statement of special educational need are above national averages. The academy houses a

specialist resource base, the ASCEND Unit for a small proportion of students from around the local area who have extreme emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Since the last inspection, the academy has some undergone significant change. Students are taught in new, purpose-built facilities which are close to completion. The substantive Principal left the academy in September 2014. Since then, it has been led by you as acting Principal. An Interim Executive Board has replaced the governing body. The academy sponsor has implemented a progress board to oversee the academy's improvement.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

During this period of change, not enough has been done to maintain the good behaviour noted at the time of the last inspection, or to improve the attendance of all students. Since your appointment as acting Principal, improvements have been made. You and your staff are raising students' aspirations by encouraging them to 'believe and achieve' to improve their behaviour, attendance and achievement. It is too early to gauge the full impact of this strategy but early indications are becoming evident.

Your records show that most students behave themselves. Those students who met with me during the inspection commented favourably on the improved behaviour in and around the academy. They feel quite safe and say that incidents of all forms of bullying are rare. I found that most students are respectful and courteous to staff and each other. They work together well to organise activities and equipment in practical lessons.

Expectations of students are higher. Almost all students adhere to the academy's dress code. Students say that uniform checks take place every lesson. They wear with pride their badges for regular attendance and colours to reward their commitment. Each day, pastoral staff supervise students as they enter and leave the academy. Most students are punctual, but a small minority of them are often late. Records are maintained but they do not include clear explanations of the reasons why some students are late. Students say that this year, lateness leads automatically to a detention.

During breaks and lunchtimes students cluster together in friendship groups in the dining room and college areas. They are generally sociable and respectful towards each other. High levels of supervision enable staff to manage students' behaviour, remind them about moving quickly to lessons, and foster good relations with them. The academy's new buildings and grounds are not fully finished and this restricts students' movement during breaks and lunchtimes. Students feel that behaviour would improve further if they could play games outdoors and move about freely around the school grounds.

You have made less impact in improving students' attitudes towards learning in lessons. This is because the quality of teaching often fails to capture and retain their interest. In some lessons, expectations of students are too low. Tasks are not challenging enough and do not encourage or motivate them to work hard. When this happens, students do not misbehave, but some of them lose interest, disengage from learning and become passive which slows their work rate. Your own evaluation

has accurately identified this issue. Actions to improve it are rightly prioritised in the academy's development plans.

During the inspection, most classrooms were calm and orderly but too many students showed casual attitudes towards learning. They worked steadily at their own pace rather than quickly, because they are allowed to do so. During questioning and discussion, not all teachers encouraged them to engage fully and make suggestions, so a minority sat back, let others do the work and do not listen attentively. Some teachers accepted students shouting-out answers rather than applying the academy's agreed procedures to respond to those with their hands up to show that they are ready to answer.

In some lessons, not all students arrive fully prepared for learning with basic equipment such as pencils and rulers, and rely upon teachers to provide them. I noted that some students use technology responsibly but others do not. For example, in an art lesson students used their own mobile phones and tablets well to research information about an artist, but in an English lesson students used their tablets without permission to play games.

Clear procedures are in place to manage students' behaviour and encourage them to 'make the right choice'. They understand the sanctions applied for poor behaviour and value the 'Vivo Miles' awarded for good behaviour. They told me that the majority of teachers apply these procedures consistently, but a few do not and this leads to a small minority of students disrupting the learning of others. For example, in one lesson during the inspection the teacher challenged poor behaviour by issuing a warning and then a second warning, but when one student persisted in behaving poorly no further action was taken to prevent him from disrupting the learning of others. All of the students who met with me said that recently, at least one of their lessons had been disrupted by one or two poorly behaved students.

The proportion of students temporarily excluded from the academy is falling but remains high. Three students were permanently excluded last year due to serious misbehaviour. Those that regularly display poor behaviour are removed from lessons and sent to the 'Think Tank', the academy's inclusion room. Records show that the proportion of students referred this term has risen, partly due to the higher expectations of staff and their insistence on good behaviour. These students work in isolation but also receive nurturing and care from staff in the support centre to help them reflect upon, and improve their behaviour.

Students attending the ASCEND Unit benefit from a high-quality learning environment and weekly opportunities to be taught by some of your staff, both in the unit and in the academy's specialist facilities. Challenging behaviour is managed firmly and sensitively, enabling students to learn effectively and make progress.

The arrangements made to educate a small minority of poorly behaved students off-site last year were not successful. Not all of them remained in their placements and achieved basic qualifications. New arrangements have been made this year to ensure that students taught off-site attend regularly and are working towards a range of GCSE and other qualifications.

At the time of the last inspection attendance was low. It has improved and is much closer to the national average. Students say that they are more eager to come into the academy, and if they are absent staff will come round to their homes to find out why. Records show that persistent absence rates are falling but remain too high. The attendance of disadvantaged students, particularly those that are disabled or have special educational needs, or are eligible for the pupil premium is lower than that of all other students. You are not analysing regularly, or in enough detail the attendance of different groups of students to evaluate whether actions taken to improve their attendance are making a difference.

Priorities for further improvement

- improve students' attitudes towards learning in lessons by ensuring that teachers:
 - plan learning that captures and retains their interest and encourages them to work hard
 - stimulate and motivate students of all abilities to engage fully during questioning and discussion.
- provide more opportunities for students to play games outdoors and move about freely around the school grounds during breaks and lunchtimes.
- monitor the attendance of disadvantaged students more closely so that it improves at the same rate as all other students.

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 Interim Executive Board and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector