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3 December 2014

Mr Gareth Stevens
Principal
Hethersett Academy
Queen's Road
Hethersett
Norwich
NR9 3DB

Dear Mr Stevens

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Hethersett Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 2 December, 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 academy.

Evidence

Evidence considered included:

- observations of pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning in lessons
- observations of pupils' behaviour throughout the day, including discussion with pupils
- documentary evidence
- discussions with school leaders, governors 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 improve behaviour and secure consistently positive attitudes to learning.

Context

Hethersett Academy is a smaller than average-sized secondary school. The number of students eligible for the pupil premium (extra government funding to support particular groups of students) is lower than average. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is slightly below average. The proportions of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are well below average. The proportion of students who join or leave the school other than at usual transfer times is above the national average. The Academy opened in November 2013 and you have been Principal since January 2014.

Behaviour and safety of students

The amount of low level disruption in lessons is not declining rapidly enough. Leaders and managers have put clear systems in place to encourage constructive behaviour in the classroom and these procedures were reviewed, clarified and sharpened in July 2014 following an audit by the sponsoring trust. However, too many teachers do not follow the academy's behaviour policy and this limits the effectiveness of their attempts to respond to poor behaviour. The number of students who have had to be removed from lessons has broadly remained constant since the academy opened. Students say that they are often frustrated that their learning is disrupted by a minority of students who are disobedient in the classroom. During the inspection, lessons were observed where students answered back to teachers and off-task talk and unproductive behaviour were not sufficiently challenged. In lessons where teachers did apply the academy's behaviour policy attitudes to learning were frequently positive and constructive.

Academy leaders and managers have not yet had sufficient impact on improving behaviour in lessons where temporary supply teachers are covering for an absent member of staff. They have rightly identified that poor attitudes to learning have been particularly evident in lessons covered by temporary staff. The academy has worked hard to minimise the number of lessons where a temporary teacher or teaching assistant is needed. However, behaviour is not improving quickly enough because too little has been done to ensure that temporary teachers are applying the academy's behaviour policy consistently.

During timetabled lessons that are allocated for private study or homework, teachers do not always ensure that students are working productively and industriously. The academy has extended the teaching day by one period, for three days a week, to provide additional learning opportunities for students ('period 6'). Where this extra period is used to provide clearly defined and well-planned additional curricular or extra-curricular lessons, student attitudes are largely positive and behaviour constructive. When activities are less structured, students do not perceive that teachers have high expectations of their attitudes and their behaviour deteriorates as a result.

Not all students regulate their behaviour when they are away from direct staff supervision; students particularly complain that there is too much swearing around

the academy site during social times and the use of bad language amongst students was heard during break and lunchtime on two occasions during the inspection. While levels of supervision at these times are generally high, the academy does not effectively staff all areas where students are allowed within the academy building to eat, and this sometimes results in poor behaviour.

Most students do move around the site in a calm and orderly manner. Staff presence between lessons is strong and students respond to their instructions to move promptly to their next lesson. The expectations of academy leaders about the appearance of students are communicated very clearly to students and staff alike and, as a result, most students wear their uniforms smartly. Students look after the academy site well. Attendance is good and most students arrive punctually to the academy in the morning.

The academy has recently tightened its procedures for responding to and recording incidents of bullying. Leaders and managers now routinely check on the impact of interventions on any victims of bullying. The academy has promoted a number of high-profile anti-bullying events. Consequently, the number of incidents of bullying is declining and students say that they are increasingly confident that when they do occur they are handled well. There are very few incidents of racist or homophobic bullying.

Academy leaders have recently introduced a system of rewards to encourage positive behaviour. Students are able to earn vouchers for practical items of school equipment, and even food from the canteen when they behave well. This has been received enthusiastically by students although it is too soon for any impact upon behaviour to have been conclusively evaluated. This is one of a number of new or revised strategies for promoting improved behaviour. It would be helpful to parents if the academy behaviour policy published on the website, which establishes broad principles and responsibilities for managing behaviour, explained the new rewards systems and other procedures. Governors also need to ensure that the future dates for review of the behaviour policy are clearly indicated on the academy website.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that all staff apply the academy's behaviour policy at all times.
- Reduce the number of students who have to be removed from lessons.
- Ensure that behaviour in lessons taught by a substitute member of staff is managed more effectively.
- Improve the conduct of students on site when they are away from direct adult supervision, particularly reducing the amount of swearing among students.
- Ensure that there are consistently high expectations of productive working attitudes during all periods of the academy day, including 'period 6'.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Norfolk, 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

Paul Lawrence
Associate Inspector