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29 January 2015

Sue Bradley
The Kingsmead School
Bridge Street
Derby
DE1 3LB

Dear Mrs Bradley

No formal designation monitoring inspection of The Kingsmead School

Following my visit to your school on 27 January 2015, 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 me and the time you took to discuss behaviour in your 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 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 and staff.

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

Leaders and managers have taken effective action to improve behaviour and secure consistently positive attitudes to learning.

Context

The Kingsmead School is a pupil referral unit that forms part of a larger integrated provision for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and includes a special school. Students from the units are taught alongside those from the special school. The two provisions share the same senior leadership team, governing body, teaching staff and administrative team. The school has seven different sites within

the City of Derby. At the time of this inspection the pupil referral unit had 128 secondary age pupils on roll. Over three quarters of students are boys. A third of students are from minority ethnic groups. Around 15% of students speak English as an additional language. Over three quarters of students are eligible for pupil premium, government funding to support disadvantaged students and those looked after by the local authority. Around 9% of students are looked after by the state.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour around the school and in lessons during the inspection was largely good. In the one incident seen where a pupil was finding it difficult to remain in class, this was well supported.

The students I spoke to during the inspection felt that behaviour in their school was usually good and that students were very well supported if they are finding situations challenging. Students feel that the reward and sanctions system works well and that there is a consistent approach to this. They speak passionately about the high expectations that staff in the school have for students and the difference that this has made to them. They say that the school expects them to attend, behave and achieve. Pupils strongly believe that racist, homophobic language is rare and always challenged and that the few incidents of bullying are immediately addressed. Three incidents, involving racist or homophobic language, were witnessed during this inspection. These were challenged but it was unclear if any were recorded.

In the lessons visited during the inspection, students generally showed positive attitudes to their learning. In some lessons, students coped well with revising for a mock exam and were comfortable answering some challenging questions in maths. In all of the lessons observed there were positive relationships between staff and students. Students largely show respect to staff and to each other and understand the expectation that they will focus on their learning in lessons. The use of key workers, who each have responsibility for a small number of students, underpins learning and pastoral support. One student who had a history of multiple exclusions in previous settings spoke compellingly about how his key worker had changed his life for the better.

Arriving and departing from school was well ordered and good humoured and students are warmly welcomed by staff. Students say that it is always like this. The school rule is for students to hand in their mobile phones on arrival and students know this. A pupil with an energy drink had it taken off him, it was explained why and he accepted that he had broken the rules. Students say that they know that weapons or drugs cannot be bought into school.

Behaviour at break and lunchtimes was good. Students have a small range of choices at these times, which they say is the right amount given the short amount of time they have. Supervision by staff was active and visible. Students said that this is always the case.

The management of behaviour across the school was good. You, your senior leaders and the staff team know your students very well. You have an accurate understanding of behaviour in the school and strong knowledge of your students' needs.

Since the last inspection leaders have further developed the support and strategies in place to help students with different needs to manage and improve their behaviour. A range of creative therapies are provided and a nurture group for students transferring into key stage 3 is in place. School leaders have funded a transition project to support students in year 6 at the primary phase pupil referral unit move to year 7. This project started in April 2014 and the impact on attendance and behaviour is being closely monitored. Early indications are positive. Students talked very positively about the support they receive from the school to improve. Those who had moved from other schools felt settled and well supported. One student commented 'they never give up on you' and another said 'staff just know what to do'.

Senior leaders have taken strong action to address low attendance. An attendance manager now tracks, scrutinises and challenges attendance at all bases on a daily basis and has regular meetings with base managers to monitor attendance. An attendance officer has been appointed to support this role and work with families. An increasing number of families are now being taken forward through the court system for persistent absenteeism. Attendance information is now shared weekly with senior leaders. Governors actively monitor and challenge attendance. The school's leaders agree that they could make it clearer to all staff that the expectation is for all students to attend all of the time.

Leaders have been disadvantaged by the city wide transfer from one electronic data management system to another as there have been problems transferring information between the two.

The school's leaders are funding transport to alternative providers for students who are persistent absentees. The impact of this is being monitored. Attendance targets for students are set individually by key workers and moderated by the attendance manager. School leaders are rightly pleased that the percentage of students not in education, employment or training when they leave the unit has fallen from 17% to 9% in two years. Some students say that they know that the school expects them to attend all of the time but others have targets with lower expectations.

The number of fixed term exclusions remains high although reportedly falling slightly. The data transfer problem also means that exact figures for exclusions at the pupil referral unit were not available at this inspection. The school's leaders use fixed term exclusion only for the most serious offences and this is most often during a student's first term at the school following a turbulent period prior to joining. Almost none were excluded more than once, indicating that the strategy is not over-used and generally has a positive impact on students' behaviour. Physical intervention is used sparingly and when it is, it is recorded and reviewed. The school does not use any internal exclusion rooms.

The school's leaders acknowledge that they do not always currently scrutinise patterns of behaviour within the school day sufficiently to enable them to identify where changes to provision or additional support might have a positive impact on behaviour and attendance.

The local authority confirms that the school's leaders have raised concerns that it cannot meet the needs of a number of students placed with them. These students

account for a number of exclusions and have low attendance. The local authority is currently unable to identify any alternative provision which could meet their needs.

Governors have a good overview of behaviour, attendance and safety in the school. They use the school's own data to ask challenging questions and to evaluate whether actions are as effective as they should be. They visit the school regularly and share your high expectations.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that attendance and exclusion information provides an accurate picture for the students attending the pupil referral unit and that the highest expectations for attendance are made explicit by the school's leaders
- Scrutinise patterns of behaviour within the school day sufficiently to further support improvements to behaviour and attendance

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

Karen Gannon
Her Majesty's Inspector