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5 February 2015

Gill Fox
Kings Norton Girls' School
Selly Oak Road
Birmingham
B30 1HW

Dear Ms Fox

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Kings Norton Girls' School

Following my visit to your academy on 4 February 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because the Chief Inspector was concerned about the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements and the management of behaviour, particularly related to students who are disabled and who have special educational needs.

Evidence

Due to the academy closure for staff training purposes in the afternoon of the inspection, students could only be seen in lessons, and spoken to, during the morning session. A range of documentation was scrutinised during the inspection including the single central record, other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements and the academy's records of behaviour and attendance, including exclusions. I made a series of short visits to lessons and to the 'isolation room' and observed students at break. Meetings were held with yourself and the deputy headteacher, the person responsible for co-ordinating special educational needs provision (SENCO), the family support worker and the Chair of the Governing Body and one other governor. I spoke informally with students and staff, and met with a parent who requested a meeting with me.

I focused particularly on evaluating:

- whether safeguarding procedures meet requirements
- how well reasonable adjustments are made to manage the behaviour of disabled students and those with special educational needs

- how well the academy responds to behaviour-related incidents and helps students to improve their behaviour
- whether there is thorough recording and follow up to any incidents that occur, and clear and appropriate communication with parents
- how well absence is monitored, and the effectiveness of procedures to promote good attendance for all groups
- how effectively the academy prevents and tackles bullying, particularly for disabled students and those who have special educational needs
- how well the academy helps students to understand differences and to learn about people of other faiths, cultures and backgrounds

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

The academy's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

Context

The academy is of average size and admits girls in the 11-19 age range. The academy shares the teaching of some aspects of the sixth form curriculum with the nearby boys' school, Kings Norton Boys' School. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of students who are disabled or who have special educational needs is below average, as is the proportion believed to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is above average. A number of physically disabled students and those identified as having an autistic spectrum disorder attend the academy.

Inspection findings

Academy leaders, including governors, have recognised where there were weaknesses in the way behaviour is managed and the support given to those who are disabled or who have special educational needs. Senior leaders have taken decisive action to improve this aspect of the work of the academy.

Attendance and punctuality is rigorously monitored by the recently appointed deputy headteacher. Using this system, individual students or vulnerable groups can be quickly identified at the earliest sign of any decline in attendance. Improvements can also be seen which demonstrate the effectiveness of the actions you have put into place to work with families of students with low attendance and those who are frequently absent. The same approach has enabled you to quickly identify students who are late for the start of the academy day. Parents are immediately informed and same-day detentions are issued where the reason given for lateness was avoidable.

The family support worker, working under the supervision of the deputy headteacher, supports families of students with poor attendance. Telephone calls are made to alert families to concerns about attendance which are followed up by home

visits and involvement of outside agencies where appropriate. The family support worker works closely with the child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and social services, but also organises access to other support if this is requested by families, such as for advice on coping with financial hardship.

Attendance information is regularly reviewed by governors who know about patterns in attendance of particular groups such as disadvantaged students or those who are disabled or who have special educational needs. No overall improvement in attendance can be demonstrated as yet but you are able to show improvements for individual students who have worked with the family support worker.

Restructuring of systems for supporting disabled students and those who have special educational needs has taken place including a review of the deployment of teaching assistants. In a shift in focus from teaching to learning, learning assistants have been appointed to five new roles with the most recent starting in January 2015. In addition to subject specific support in English and mathematics, individual learning assistants have responsibility for meeting the specific needs of students including physical disabilities and emotional needs. Other teaching assistants were seen working with students who have statements of special educational need and supporting students who had been absent in filling gaps in their learning. As a result of this high quality support, and adaptation of resources to help individual students to learn more effectively, students were making better progress with their learning.

During the morning session, when students were present in the academy, there was a calm and orderly atmosphere around the site and disabled students integrated well with their peers. Large numbers of students showed good manners and queued patiently to use the dining room at break. Similar large numbers sat in small groups in the hall where they chatted sociably with their friends. Queues were well managed by Year 11 prefects who described the positive regard and respect shown to them by other students. Year 7 students were described as being 'silly' when they first join the academy and sometimes try to avoid taking their turn in queues. The dining room and hall were well supervised by teachers although students were self-managing of their behaviour and showed respect for their environment, needing very few reminders to stack their chairs at the end of break or to pick up their litter. Some students complained about the lack of available seating in the dining room for them to eat their food, and teachers need to manage this more efficiently by 'moving on' those who have finished eating.

Not all students moved purposefully to their next class between lessons and there was some time wasted between lessons. Corridors, where lockers are stored, become very congested making smooth movement more difficult. A group of students seen queuing by a printer in the corridor were not supervised by adults while they waited for their work to print, before returning to their classroom, and some learning time was wasted.

In lessons, students usually work hard and listen attentively to their teachers. Some low level disruption was seen where teachers made less effort to engage all students and to keep them occupied for the whole time on tasks that made them think hard.

In these lessons, students resorted to chatting with friends sat behind them, looking through the window, or playing with the blinds in rooms.

The 'isolation room' was unoccupied during the inspection but no safeguarding issues were identified in the way this facility operates. Learning assistants and raising achievement leaders who work in the adjacent area supervise any students in isolation. As it is a staff area, the room requires a code to enter, but students are able to freely exit the room. Although work is provided for students while in isolation for the maximum 24 hour period, learning time is lost if students are unable to complete work without specialist support. Students in isolation are also unable to fully engage with practical subjects such as physical education or design and technology. Records of students who have been referred to the isolation room show this sanction is not an effective deterrent for around 30 students who re-offend, some of whom are disabled or who have special educational needs. Academy leaders need to explore a wider range of alternative sanctions to help those students who need additional support to manage their behaviour.

Academy leaders keep records of incidents of inappropriate behaviour and all reported incidents of bullying. These are analysed and information is provided for governors. Many of the bullying incidents are 'name-calling' and are the result of friendships breaking down, sometimes related to relationships outside the academy. However, there are some incidents which require further intervention by raising achievement leaders. Sometimes students who are disabled or who have special educational needs are told by their peers that they are an 'idiot' or are 'stupid'. Students were confident that when they tell the SENCO about this, the alleged bullies would be dealt with appropriately and the bullying would stop. Academy leaders need to take further action to teach students how to understand differences and to learn more about how their unkind words make others feel.

The planned curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is detailed and covers a wide range of themes so that students know about cyber-bullying, for example, and how to keep themselves safe and healthy including knowing about extremism and radicalisation. However, this course is typically delivered in one 20 minute session each week, during registration. Students say this is a 'waste of time' and 'pointless'. More needs to be done by senior leaders to make sure students understand the importance of this course and make sure all teachers are delivering this part of the PSHE curriculum to the same high standard.

Safeguarding procedures meet requirements. The single central record is detailed and suitable checks are carried out for all visitors to the academy, including outside speakers who are invited to talk in assemblies. Staff receive frequent and up-to-date safeguarding training on a range of themes including e-safety, child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and how to report concerns about safeguarding issues.

Governors are aware of where there were weaknesses in academy systems related to the provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs. As a result, they have made sure that improvements have been made to the way in which

academy leaders communicate with parents to keep them better informed when there are concerns about students and any actions that will be taken. Policies on the academy website were old and due for review. There are now new policies for special educational needs and inclusion, behaviour for learning, safeguarding and child protection (including anti-bullying and ICT). These reflect improvements made to systems in the academy and are due to be presented for ratification to all governors at the next scheduled meeting. Safer recruitment training has been carried out for some governors and all staffing appointments have representation from a suitably trained governor on the interview panel.

External support

The academy accesses a range of services through the local authority, commissioning services as they are required, for example through the communication and autism team. Additional support is also brokered through an educational psychologist and the services of a school nurse. The academy shares their family support worker with a cluster of schools. This support is having a positive impact on attendance in the academy. The academy also employs a counsellor who supports students with social and emotional difficulties.

Priorities for further improvement

- Introduce a wider range of alternative sanctions to help those students who need additional support to manage their behaviour, especially those who are disabled or who have special educational needs.
- Take further action to teach students how to understand differences and to learn more about how their unkind words make others feel.
- Ensure senior leaders carry out checks on learning in PSHE to make sure there are no inconsistencies in the way this is planned and taught across the academy.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham, to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Education Funding Agency, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Denah Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector