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Principal
Torquay Academy
Cricket Field Road
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Dear Mr Margetts

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Torquay Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 3 March 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 academy.

Evidence

Inspectors considered evidence including:

- observations of students' behaviour and their attitudes to learning in lessons
- observations of students' behaviour throughout the day, as well as discussions 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 taken effective action to improve behaviour and secure consistently positive attitudes to learning.

Context

Torquay Academy is a small secondary school with 989 students on roll. The small sixth form is in its second year. Most students are from a White British background and very few speak English as an additional language. Half of the students are known to be eligible for the pupil premium; this is well above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs with or without a statement is above the average of schools nationally. Most of these students have moderate learning or behavioural difficulties. The Principal took up his post in January 2014. The academy has experienced a high turnover of staff and 22 staff appointments have been made since September 2014.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Since the last full Ofsted inspection in June 2014, the Principal and senior leaders have continued with their purposeful actions to raise teachers' expectations and improve students' attitudes to learning.

Leaders and teachers give a consistent message to students about how to behave in all lessons. These expectations are prominent around the campus and followed closely by staff. In all the lessons observed there was a strong focus on students entering the classroom in silence, being ready to learn, listening to the teacher and each other and using polite language. Teachers are making every effort to praise students for their efforts in meeting expectations of behaviour and this is building a climate of respect between students and staff.

A comprehensive training programme for staff in managing students' behaviour has reduced the number of incidents of low-level behaviour that prevent students from learning well. This has combined with training to improve teachers' abilities to plan interesting tasks and activities that help maintain students' engagement. There are plenty of opportunities in lessons for group work and discussions that encourage students to share their ideas and take more responsibility for their learning.

The majority of students discuss and work sensibly with their partners. The appetite to do well is strongly supported through an achievement, behaviour and attendance rewards programme. This culminates in an awards ceremony that students value highly.

There are lessons where the expectations of students' learning are not high enough. In these lessons teachers ask easy questions and too readily accept one word answers. Not all teachers get their lessons off to a quick start because they spend too long registering students or do not direct them to work as soon as they are seated. Occasionally, seating plans meant that students did not have classmates they could immediately share ideas with when asked to do so. These are irritations for students and get in the way of strengthening their positive attitudes to learning.

The atmosphere in and around the academy is calm and orderly. The number of disputes between students has diminished quickly since September. Academy

leaders, under the direction of the Principal, successfully implement 'zero tolerance' in managing students' behaviour. This includes insisting that students wear the correct uniform, arrive to lessons on time and do not chew gum, wear headphones or use bad language. Leaders have a high profile. They chat to students, inspire everyone to keep the campus free from litter and encourage students quickly into lessons. Students appreciate that the Principal knows them all by name and shows an interest in how they are getting on in their work and behaviour. Staff report how they welcome academy leaders' immediate support in underpinning the academy behaviour policy.

The beginning and end of the day are managed extremely effectively. Students attend promptly and queue in an orderly manner before filing into lessons. Lateness is a thing of the past. At the end of the day there is no rush to leave. Students are happy to talk with friends and staff or move off sensibly to the various clubs or to additional lessons.

The zero tolerance shown towards bad language is working well. There was no bad language heard during the visit, either in lessons, at break time or in the canteen. Students relate that incidents of inappropriate language, including of a racist and homophobic type, are rare. Canteen staff report a positive improvement in students' attitudes towards each other when lining up and passing through the dining hall.

A small minority of students find other ways to challenge the authority of teachers in lessons through their body language. For example, some students slouch or are slow to turn back from discussions with their classmates to face the teacher. Generally teachers manage this well and praise students when they get a positive reaction to their instruction. However, sanctions are sometimes required and teachers apply these correctly. The system is well understood by students and teachers.

There are still some students who find behaving consistently well in lessons or responding to sanctions difficult. These students attend specialised provision within the academy. This provision is adjusted to meet the students' needs, some of which are complex. The students' return to class is managed sensitively. Daily detentions are appropriately supervised and record keeping is thorough. This enables leaders to adjust provision for students in lessons or tackle the root cause of the problems that led to the imposition of sanctions. Strengthening students' resilience so that they do not give up easily and building their confidence as learners are high priorities among leaders.

The arrangements for students who spend a longer period in the specialised provision include teaching from some of the best teachers in the academy to ensure they do not slip behind in their learning. Therapeutic support is proving effective in helping students manage their behaviour and turn around their negative attitudes towards learning.

Despite this effective provision, some students are excluded for one or more days. This number has not reduced in part because the thresholds for exclusion have been lowered to reflect the determination of leaders and governors that nothing but impeccable behaviour is a requirement of all students. The number of individuals involved has reduced but a hard core remains. Leaders are using the detailed behaviour records of incidents that result in exclusion to reduce incidents. For

example, they monitor teachers' use of praise for individuals in lessons or how often students are provided with items of uniform to wear in the academy. The academy has increased the opportunities for more students to take on positions of responsibility to spread the duty for behaviour management more widely across the year groups. The impact of these actions and others is closely monitored by leaders and staff. There is a growing culture of using research and reports to seek effective solutions.

Too many students do not attend regularly. The attendance officers work with families and agencies but this is not proving effective. Not enough analysis of the data on attendance has been undertaken by leaders to pinpoint the underlying reasons for students electing not to attend. The policy itself does not provide enough detail on how students can overcome influences that stop them attending. The attendance policy does not make sufficient reference to how it links to 'Keeping children safe in education', the most recent guidance from the Department for Education.

There are very few recorded instances of bullying. Students know it is treated seriously. Students know that bullying takes many forms. There are frequent learning and assembly experiences that develop students' understanding of the effect of bullying behaviour. There is an effective regular programme that teaches students and their families about online bullying and risks associated with social media. Students know at least three staff they are confident of reporting bullying instances to; one, the community police officer, works in the academy full time. He is adept at picking up on the signs that suggest bullying may be occurring and is quick to identify perpetrators. The students respond to the restorative justice systems and incidents have fallen sharply. The students welcome his presence along with senior staff at the start and end of the day. This action contributes to the students feeling positively about their own safety.

Priorities for further improvement

- Reduce the proportion of wasted time at the start of lessons.
- Provide more guidance to teachers on how to maintain effective engagement of students in lessons.
- Improve students' attendance.

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

Jonathan Palk
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc Chair of the Governing Body