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4 March 2015

Mr Chris Richardson
Headteacher
Heworth Grange Comprehensive School
High Lane
Gateshead
Tyne and Wear
NE10 0PT

Dear Mr Richardson

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Heworth Grange Comprehensive School

Following my visit to your school 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 school.

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspector considered evidence including:

- observations of students' behaviour and their attitudes to learning in lessons
- observations of students' behaviour throughout the day, including through discussions with students
- 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 continue to take effective action to maintain the standards of behaviour and attitudes identified at the school's previous inspection.

Context

Heworth Grange is a slightly larger-than-average sized secondary school with a much higher-than-average proportion of disadvantaged students who are known to be eligible for the government's additional free school meals funding. A lower than average number of students are of minority ethnic heritage. The proportion of students identified as being disabled or with special educational needs is broadly

average. The proportion of students who stay at the school from Year 7 to Year 11 is similar to that found nationally. Two students are educated in part-time, off site registered alternative provision. A group of 13 students with complex medical or emotional needs are dually registered with other providers of education. Eight are supported by Gateshead Council's home and hospital teaching service and the remainder access registered alternative provision for part of the school week. Since the last inspection the numbers of teachers has reduced due to financial constraints.

Behaviour and safety of students

Actions taken by senior leaders continue to secure the calm and friendly atmosphere identified at the time of the last inspection in October 2012. Students arrive at school in a safe and orderly manner. They mix sociably with their friends in the well-supervised dining area at the start of each day. They move on to their tutor groups responsibly. All students wear their uniform and look smart. This is because there is a strict code of conduct for uniform and equipment and students are checked for compliance regularly. When moving from class to class there is a sense of purpose in the corridors and students are rarely late for their next lesson. Those who dawdle are identified quickly and action is taken to reduce reoccurrences. Work to improve punctuality since the last inspection has reduced late incidents by half.

Students' behaviour in lessons is usually good. They settle down quickly and display positive attitudes to learning; responding appropriately to requests made by staff. The large majority of students listen to adults and their peers respectfully. The school's work to develop cooperative learning is paying dividends and students work together productively when they are given group tasks to complete.

Occasionally students do not focus well-enough on their work and this leads to some low-level misbehaviour. Students report that the number of lessons disrupted by such behaviour has reduced over time well. This is in-part due to improvements to the school's behaviour policy and its implementation but also due to the increased range of pastoral support provided and other strategies used by staff to de-escalate potentially challenging behaviours. Strategies like 'rescue base' and 'corridor support' where students are supported to reflect on their behaviour with senior staff or given a short period of 'time-out' are helping to reduce disruption in lessons and the number of more serious incidents which result in students going to the school's referral base. Records show that the proportion of students needing help through corridor support and rescue base has reduced significantly as a result of the collective strategies. Records are not shared consistently well with the governing body so they cannot evaluate the effectiveness of the school's work in improving behaviour over time. Students' who attend the referral base work on their own for short periods and are closely supervised by senior staff. They also receive carefully targeted support from inclusion staff where needed. Actions help students to catch-up on work missed and reflect upon, and improve their behaviour.

The improved behaviour policy comprises a rewards and sanctions approach that is understood clearly by staff and students. Staff report they feel well-supported and well-trained in delivering the policy. Students report that teachers are much more consistent in their use of rewards and the use of the 'stepped' sanctions for misbehaviour. They particularly value the 'Vivos' awarded for good behaviour which they convert to financial rewards. They feel that most teachers make sure good behaviour is rewarded appropriately.

Discrete staff presence at break times and in specific year group areas across school enables students to socialise with their friends safely. Long queues develop for lunch but students are patient, orderly and friendly toward one another. Again, well-supervised by staff, students are able to stay in school, move around the well-supervised grounds or attend a range of lunch time activities. Students say nowhere is judged a 'no go area' in terms of their safety and report that they feel safe. They say they are well-taught about risks to their personal safety through the curriculum, assemblies and the guidance and help from the inclusion support team and other key staff in times of need. Students are made well-aware of different types of bullying. They report that name calling, including of a homophobic or racist nature does happen but incidents are rare and dealt with firmly by staff. Incidents are meticulously recorded and monitored by senior staff and actions taken as a result have shown a significant reduction in the past two years.

Attendance rates are below average but have increased by 1.6% since the last inspection. Attendance is rising as a result of strategies such as additional individual targeted support to students at risk of non-attendance and disaffection; particularly those in Year 11. Timely attendance meetings with parents now take place when students' attendance starts to slip. Easter truancy sweeps with the local authority are helping to stamp out a previous blip in attendance rates in the summer term. Work with primary school pupils and their parents is helping them to understand the high expectations of conduct and behaviour at Heworth Grange. Leaders know there is more to do to ensure attendance rates are at least average and are developing further their inclusion support work to help all students at risk. This is needed particularly to narrow the gap in attendance between students entitled to free school meals and other students.

Staff work closely with students and secure effective support from external agencies when necessary, when students are at risk of permanent exclusion. This sanction is used as a last resort and only one student has been permanently excluded this year. Three had been permanently excluded at the time of the last inspection. The proportion of students temporarily excluded, although reducing is still too high. Rates are starting to fall due to leaders' work to ensure teachers apply the school's behaviour policy consistently and their high expectations of all in terms of respectful relationships. One student echoed this approach when she asserted that 'this is a friendly school and people usually get along with each other'.

Senior leaders liaise well with the alternative education providers who support the very small number of students educated off-site. They check closely students' attendance, behaviour, safety and progress. One young person spoke powerfully about how well he has been supported to find the right part-time provision to help meet his aspirations for the future and his complex needs. Students who have been at risk of permanent exclusion or poor attendance report convincingly about how staff work closely with them to help them deal with difficulties or challenges in their lives as well as supporting them to remain in school and in learning.

Priorities for further improvement

- Develop strategies to reduce further the attendance gap between students entitled to free school meals and other students.
- Use the detailed information the school holds regarding the proportion of students using the referral room and the use of corridor or rescue support to

ensure governors can check more robustly the impact of these procedures and the school's work in improving behaviour and in reducing the number of students subject to temporary exclusion.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Gateshead, the Secretary of State for Education and the Chair of the Governing Body. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Farrow
Her Majesty's Inspector