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Nathan Hunnisett and Steve Durkin
Acting Heads of School
The Gateway Academy
Marshfoot Road
Chadwell St Mary
Essex
RM16 4LU

Dear Mr Hunnisett and Mr Durkin

No formal designation monitoring inspection of The Gateway Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 25 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 during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss behaviour at the academy.

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

I considered a range of evidence including:

- observations of students' behaviour and their attitudes to learning in lessons
- observations of students' behaviour throughout the day, including discussion 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 maintain the high standards and attitudes identified at the academy's previous inspection.

Context

The Gateway Academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school. The number of students on roll is 982. Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is below the national average. Nearly half the students are

eligible for pupil premium funding (additional funding provided for students known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority) which is well above the national average. The proportion of students who have special educational needs is well above the national average. Although staff turnover is low, the recruitment of suitable teaching staff remains a challenge for the academy.

A new senior leadership team was established in the summer term of 2014. The Principal was replaced with two acting heads of school who jointly lead the academy.

Behaviour and safety of students

Students arrive at the academy sensibly and members of staff are present to welcome them at the entrance. Students who arrive late for any reason are given an appropriate sanction which takes the form of a detention at the end of the academy day. The overwhelming majority of students adhere to the academy's uniform rules and are proud of their appearance. The very few students who need reminding of the high standards of dress code, such as tucking their shirts in, comply willingly with staff's requests to put this right. All members of staff, including non-teaching staff, are expected to be present around the academy during lesson changeover to supervise students' movement around the academy and they interact with students well.

The staggered morning break and lunchtime arrangements ensure that the canteen and outside areas do not become too crowded. The inspector observed students socialising with each other well both in the canteen area and in the outside areas. Students from different ethnic groups mix well together. Breaks and lunchtimes are typically well supervised by members of staff and any vulnerable spaces are monitored by CCTV cameras to enhance site security. Students respect their academy environment and look after it.

Incidents of bullying are increasingly rare. Students told the inspector that academy staff take a firm stance on bullying and are confident that any reported incidents of bullying will be resolved quickly and effectively. The academy's records of bullying incidents show a sharp decline in the number of incidents recorded so far in 2014–2015 compared to the previous academic year. Students have a strong awareness of the dangers associated with social networking sites. This topic is covered well in ICT lessons, tutor time, special assemblies and through events specifically aimed at educating parents and carers.

Students arrive at their lessons punctually and bring the correct equipment. The inspector saw very little low-level disruptive behaviour when visiting lessons and academy records of classroom behaviour support this. When this was observed, it usually involved a student swinging on their chair or chewing. When teachers notice this behaviour they speak to the students concerned who comply with their teachers' requests. Students are allowed to use mobile telephones in lessons when such use is related to work. The inspector observed students using their telephones sensibly. For example, some used their telephones as calculators, others to do research on the internet and some used them to recall a recipe they were using in a food technology lesson.

Classroom displays are used to remind students about the academy's expectations regarding behaviour in lessons and the consequences if students do not adhere to

these expectations. Most teachers use the classroom sanctions and rewards system consistently. Students understand the system well and are well aware of the consequences. Students listen well to each other and to their teachers. Occasionally, students do not always show the same positive attitudes towards their learning when they are taught by teachers from a supply agency. These teachers are not provided with detailed guidelines on the academy's classroom rewards and sanction systems. This leads to an inconsistent approach from these teachers when dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

Students who present the most challenging behaviour are referred to the 'Consequence for Choices' room (C4C). Activities carried out in this room encourage students to reflect on their behaviour, as well as developing their literacy and mathematical skills. The proportion of students who are referred to this room has decreased over time. Although the names of students who are referred to the room are recorded, there is not a sharp enough analysis of referrals based on different student groups, the subject they have been extracted from, the time of the day they have been referred or which teacher has referred them. Hence, academy leaders are not in a position to identify trends with regard to which groups of students are referred more than others.

The inspector met with a small group of students who have presented challenging behaviour in the past. These students feel that the academy staff have worked hard to help them modify their previously poor behaviour. When necessary, the academy has used the services of external agencies to ensure greater impact, for example, the use of counsellors or experts to help students manage their anger. Parents and carers are also actively encouraged to support academy staff in helping students with more challenging behaviour to get back on track.

The new senior leadership team rightly focused on students' behaviour with a view to preventing any deterioration and maintaining high expectations. Some systems have been revised and new systems introduced. For example, the first and second dismissal system launched in May 2014 ensures that any student who does not meet the academy's high expectations for behaviour are kept behind for 10 minutes at the end of the day to reflect on their behaviour. The student leadership team played an active part in designing this new system which gives them more ownership. Students feel that they benefit from 'doing the right thing'. The academy's own records of parents views on students' behaviour gathered at parent consultation evenings show that parents have positive views about behaviour at the academy.

Students' attendance has improved and the proportion of students who are persistently absent is declining. This has been supported by the appointment of an educational welfare officer and a team of attendance ambassadors. These members of staff have also targeted students who are eligible for support from pupil premium funding resulting in a 33% reduction in the proportion of such students who are persistently absent from the academy. Established systems are in place to tackle persistent absence involving letters sent home and the use of attendance panels which are attended by the academy's attendance officer, the parents and the child in question.

The proportion of students who receive fixed-term exclusions from the academy remains below the national average. This is also the case for students who are eligible for additional support through pupil premium funding and those who have

special educational needs. This demonstrates the positive impact of the academy's systems and procedures to promote good behaviour.

Priorities for further improvement

- ensure that all agency staff are provided with an induction pack which includes guidance on how to implement the academy's behaviour policy
- analyse referrals to the Consequence for Choices room (C4C) by different groups so that trends can be identified.

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

John Daniell
Her Majesty's Inspector