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26 March 2015

Ms P Weighill  
Headteacher  
Bilton School  
Lawford Lane  
Bilton  
Rugby  
CV22 7JT

Dear Ms Weighill

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Bilton School**

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.

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 behaviour of students at the academy.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors 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 not taken effective action to maintain the high standards of behaviour and attitudes identified at the academy's previous inspection.

## **Context**

Bilton School is an average-sized secondary converter academy with a sixth form. It currently has 1017 students on-roll between the ages of 11 to 18. The proportion of students who are supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) is broadly average. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is also broadly average. The majority of students are White British and other students come from a range of minority ethnic groups. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is smaller than average. In the previous academic year, the academy admitted 72 students into Key Stages 3 and 4 part-way through the year.

On the day of inspection, a number of visits and staff absences meant that there were several classes visited where students did not have their usual teacher.

## **Behaviour and safety of students**

In the previous inspection, the behaviour and safety of students was judged to be good. High rates of absence and exclusion, particularly for vulnerable groups of students, and the mixed attitudes to learning seen in lessons on the day of inspection, indicate that these high standards have not been maintained.

During the inspection I observed high levels of engagement from students in a number of lessons. Positive attitudes were particularly evident in some of the arts-related lessons that I visited. Students were engrossed in their work, collaborated purposefully with each other and produced high quality work that they took pride in. In these lessons, students' progress was supported by the positive climate for learning that their teachers clearly set. However, in some lessons a minority of students became restless and distracted and their conduct deteriorated. They began to engage in low-level disruption, ranging from clicking pens to turning around and distracting others. This was particularly the case when the work set was not interesting enough or well-matched to some students' needs. In a number of lessons in which students did not have their usual teacher, students were slow to settle and respond to the instructions of the member of staff taking the lesson. In some cases, poor attitudes to learning were reflected in the lack of care taken when presenting work and I saw examples of graffiti in some exercise books and on folders.

Although students I spoke to felt generally positive about the standards of behaviour in the academy, they had mixed perceptions about behaviour in some of their lessons. Many felt that students behaved well in English and mathematics lessons, but that behaviour was variable elsewhere depending on which teacher they had. Nearly all students said that behaviour was considerably worse if they did not have their usual teacher.

Students generally conduct themselves in an orderly and sensible manner when outside of lessons. They are smartly dressed and wear their uniform with pride. Students' arrival to the academy site at the beginning of the day is calm and well supervised by staff. There were a small number of late arrivals to the academy on the day of inspection. The reasons for lateness were checked by senior leaders on arrival and the academy planner is used well by leaders to communicate whether appropriate sanctions need to be given by the form tutor. These procedures have led to a reduction in the number of students arriving late to school. During break times and lunchtimes, students make good use of the dining area and outdoor socialisation spaces, where I observed them talking calmly and happily in friendship groups. Students also enjoy a range of sporting activities during their break times. They are respectful of their environment and most of the site is litter free. I saw some incidents of more boisterous behaviour on the corridors, but these were swiftly tackled by members of staff on duty.

Students were well supervised during the inspection and say that this is usually the case. The students I spoke to were polite and respectful. They say that they feel safe and that bullying in the academy is rare. They trusted teachers at the academy to resolve any issues they reported. Students have a good understanding of the risks and impact of prejudice-based bullying, including the use of homophobic language, and cyber-bullying and felt that the academy had a strong sense of community in which students from different backgrounds get on well together.

The academy's behaviour policy details clear systems for promoting positive behaviour and good attendance. Rewards and sanctions are delivered through a system of stamps in students' planners. These are carefully tracked by form tutors and pastoral leaders. As a result, leaders are able to identify students who are presenting concerns earlier and put plans in place to tackle these issues. In lessons, I saw how the use of stamps for good work motivated students. Students also feel that the behaviour policy is having a positive impact on behaviour in the academy. They say that if any students do present negative behaviour, they respond quickly to sanctions. However, they also say that not all teachers apply the policy as rigorously as others and that this contributes towards inconsistencies in behaviour between classes.

On the day of inspection, I saw a number of students who had been removed from their usual class to work with another teacher because of their behaviour. This follows procedures outlined in the academy's behaviour policy. In some cases, these students were not monitored closely enough to ensure that they were making good progress on the work that they had been set. I also visited the 'PACE' centre which is an internal exclusion room for students. These students all had work set by their teachers and are well supported by the staff in the centre.

The overall attendance of students was below the national average in 2013 and 2014. Current attendance demonstrates improvements in comparison with the same time last academic year, but remains below average. However, more concerning is the proportion of students who do not attend the academy regularly. Although this has slightly improved this academic year, the proportion of students regularly absent from school remains too high and the gap with other schools nationally has widened over time. These figures are disproportionately high for vulnerable groups of students, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs, and students supported by the pupil premium, and are considerably higher for students in Key Stage 4.

During the last academic year, the academy had a large number of in-year admissions. A number of these students had existing problems with attendance and behaviour. This has been a factor in the academy not yet meeting its targets to reduce fixed-term exclusions. Overall rates of exclusion have remained considerably above national average since the previous inspection. Again, vulnerable groups of students are over-represented in these figures. Improved support for students has seen some promising reductions in these figures this academic year, including the numbers of students who are repeatedly excluded. However, rates of exclusion remain high.

These issues have not been ignored by academy leaders. Reducing exclusions and improving attendance feature prominently in the academy's improvement plan. A 'Strategic Student Support Group' meets on a regular basis to review the attendance and behaviour of the most challenging and vulnerable students. This group operates a range of bespoke packages of support and intervention to bring about improvements for individual students. These strategies include personalised support plans for students, adjustments to students' timetables, mentoring and one-to-one support in the 'Engagement for All' Centre, and work with other agencies to meet these students' needs. Leaders have also deployed pupil premium funding to put in place additional support for pupil premium students. This includes the appointment of a 'pupil premium champion' who is working closely with the families of pupil premium students and with other agencies to raise the attendance of this group of students. These actions have resulted in some considerable improvements in the behaviour and attendance of some students.

When I met formally with a group of students who had presented challenging behaviour in the past, these students spoke highly of the help that the academy had given them to improve their behaviour. They spoke about a wide range of support that had helped them to deal with their negative behaviour and better manage their emotions. As a result of this work, these students felt that they were now more positively engaged with their education.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Improve attendance, with a particular focus on reducing the absence rates for those students who do not attend the academy regularly, and focusing strongly on vulnerable groups of students.
- Reduce the use of fixed term exclusions by building on the academy's current targeted early support and intervention for students who are identified as at risk of exclusion.
- Ensure that behaviour and attitudes to learning in all classrooms are consistently good by raising expectations in all classrooms, making sure that all teachers apply the academy behaviour policy and insisting that all students take pride in their work.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Warwickshire, the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body and 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

Chris Chapman  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**