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Mrs Rachel Ireland
Principal
Haughton Academy
Salters Lane South
Darlington
County Durham
DL1 2AN

Dear Mrs Ireland

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Haughton Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 30 April 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 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about behaviour at the academy.

Evidence

I considered evidence including:

- observations of students' behaviour and their attitudes to learning in lessons
- observations of students' behaviour throughout the day, including discussions with pupils
- 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 are starting to take effective action to improve behaviour and secure consistently positive attitudes to learning.

Context

There are 730 students at the academy. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs is above the national average. The number of students from minority ethnic groups or who have English as an additional language is below the national average. The proportion of students who join and leave the academy other than at the usual times is higher than in most secondary schools. Since the last inspection the academy has appointed new heads of subject in mathematics and science, five new teachers to science and three mathematics teachers. New teachers have also been appointed in geography, English and Design and Technology along with two Heads of House and a new Special Educational Needs Coordinator.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Observations at the beginning of the day show that the vast majority of students arrive on time in a pleasant and relaxed manner chatting to their friends as they go to registration. They look smart in their uniform and are usually polite and courteous to the lollipop lady who helps them cross the road safely. Most students move around the academy well, get to their lessons on time and line up sensibly waiting to enter the classroom. At break and lunchtimes students queue for food in an orderly manner and are usually courteous to the supervisors on duty. Students usually put their rubbish in the bins provided.

At the change of lessons staff are visible on corridors but not always effective. In parts of the academy that become crowded staff are not clear enough on whether students should keep to the left when walking to avoid unnecessary crowding. Consequently there are times when this can lead to some silly and boisterous behaviour.

In lessons across subjects and year groups, many students show positive attitudes to learning. Those students preparing for examinations often listen well to what the teacher is saying and are willing to ask questions to develop their understanding. Students often work well with each other. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson students worked well together to develop their speaking and listening skills and offered constructive feedback to each other. Attitudes to learning are stronger when students are suitably challenged and engaged in the tasks they are doing.

However attitudes to learning are not consistently strong across the academy. Some students are willing to sit back and allow the lesson to wash over them. They are not sufficiently engaged in the lessons and teachers do not always challenge this well enough. Students confirmed that attitudes to learning are mixed and depend on the class they are in or the teacher that they have.

Students I spoke with throughout the day were clear about the sanctions for students who misbehaved. They were forthright about the way some teachers use the sanctions and believe that there is not enough consistency in how the consequence system is being used. One student said 'teachers are not following their own rules.' Students were less clear about the role rewards play in supporting

and developing positive behaviour across the academy. The reward stamps that are given for positive behaviour are not valued by a significant number of students and further work is needed in developing an effective rewards system.

There are some signs that overall absence has improved but leaders recognise that there is still much to do to get attendance levels at least in line with national averages. Fixed term exclusions in 2014 fell dramatically. This has partly been through the introduction of an Inclusion Room as an effective alternative to exclusion along with the work of the Behaviour Intervention Team to support students with improving their behaviour.

At the end of the day students leave the building in a calm and orderly manner and staff are on duty with some engaging productively with students. Parental surveys show that most parents believe their children are happy at the academy and well looked after. The overall number of bullying incidents has fallen and racist incidents remain low over time.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the effectiveness of staff supervision to ensure all students move around the academy in a sensible manner.
- Ensure that all staff effectively and consistently manage those students who are not demonstrating positive attitudes to learning.
- Reduce overall absence and persistent absence so that they are at least in line with national averages.

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

Yours sincerely

Phil Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector