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15 May 2015

Mr Hugh Robinson
Principal
Gosforth Academy
Knightsbridge
Great North Road
Gosforth
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE3 2JH

Dear Mr Robinson

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Gosforth Academy

Following my visit with Philip Riozzi, Her Majesty's Inspector, and with Additional Inspectors Graeme Clarke, Jim Hall, John Paddick and John Downs to your academy on 14 and 15 May 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 effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the school.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. They met with the Principal and with other senior and middle leaders. They also met formally and informally with groups of students. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors scrutinised a range of academy documents including minutes of the governing body meetings, attendance and exclusion records and the academy's own records about the quality of teaching. Inspectors visited 46 parts of lessons and examined students' work books and folders. Inspectors took account of confidential staff questionnaires and a telephone call from a parent.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The academy's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

Context

Gosforth Academy is a larger than average sized secondary school. It is part of a multi-academy trust. One of its partner middle schools, Gosforth Junior High Academy, is a member of the trust. These two academies have a single governing body and Principal. The majority of students are of White British heritage with an average number of students from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below average. The proportion of disadvantaged students, those eligible for support through the pupil premium funding, is below the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority. The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.

Main findings

The inspectors' main focus was to establish whether the academy's safeguarding arrangements met statutory requirement and whether leaders, including governors, ensure that students are safe. The inspection findings raised no concerns about either aspect of leadership and management. Inspectors did, however, identify areas of work where further improvement would strengthen the overall effectiveness of this outstanding school.

Leaders have effective and regularly reviewed systems in place to ensure that students are safe. All staff receive regular training in child protection and have a very good understanding of the procedures to follow if they encounter any concerns. Senior members of staff work carefully with outside agencies, including the local authority, to ensure that students who are at risk are well supported. The governors ensure that appropriate policies relating to child protection, anti-bullying, health and safety and whistleblowing are in place and reviewed regularly. These policies are available to parents via the academy's website.

Students are well cared for and report that they know how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. The academy's programme of personal, health and social education (PHSE) is detailed and well taught. Students report that they both enjoy and gain keen insights into how to keep themselves safe as result of this varied programme of study. They spoke enthusiastically and in detail with inspectors about their learning and life at school.

The academy has high expectations of behaviour. The vast majority of students are polite and very considerate towards each other. The way they move around the academy at breaks and between lessons is impeccable. Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good and frequently outstanding. However, for a small number of students these high expectations are sometimes too challenging. As a result, fixed-term exclusions have been higher than the average. Recently, because

of actions by the academy, this number has fallen significantly. Nevertheless, the amount of time students spend away from their lessons in the academy's internal exclusion room is too high.

The academy's curriculum is broad and balanced and prepares students well for life in modern Britain. Students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, make good and, very often, outstanding progress as a result of carefully targeted teaching. In the academy's 2014 GCSE results, the attainment of disadvantaged students in English and mathematics was close to that of other students nationally. Compared to other students in the academy, disadvantaged students' attainment was approximately two-thirds of a grade behind in English and just over one grade behind in mathematics. Academy predictions for 2015 suggest that this 'gap' will continue to close.

Teachers' expectations are high and students respond well to this. Teachers' expert questioning challenges students' assumptions and extends their thinking by focusing on 'why' and 'how' rather than 'what'. This quality teaching is reflected in students' workbooks. Despite some inconsistencies in its application, the academy has an effective approach to marking; this helps students by encouraging them to reflect carefully on their work and then act to improve it. Although the presentation of students' work is generally good, not all staff insist on consistently high standards. Inspectors saw examples of untidy work that had gone unchallenged by staff. This included poor handwriting and sloppily constructed charts and graphs.

The sixth form offers a wide range of courses and students do well. There are high levels of support for individual students. Students are well prepared for their next steps in learning, training or employment because of the breadth of their experiences both in and out of the classroom. Many students progress to higher education. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and their focused questioning makes a valuable contribution to supporting learning. They check carefully for understanding and 'stretch' students so that they do well. However, not all students reach their potential, especially in Year 13. Leaders' planning and evaluations are not always detailed enough and, consequently, there are occasions when staff are not held to account for the effectiveness of their teaching.

Governors have a clear vision for the academy and its role as a provider of excellence in the Gosforth community. They have an accurate knowledge of the academy's performance from year to year and are aware of areas for improvement. However, governors are not always as up to date as they should be about the progress that students are making. Neither are they sufficiently clear about the impact of the actions that leaders have taken to improve the academy.

External support

The governors employ an external consultant to provide an annual evaluation of the strengths and areas for development across the federation. Although helpful in providing a broad picture of performance, the report does not provide governors

with sufficiently detailed and up-to-date information about the performance of students at Gosforth Academy.

Priority for further improvement

- Ensure that the academy-wide approach to marking and commenting on students' work and presentation, including their handwriting, is consistently applied so that all students are clear about what they need to do to improve.
- Further reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions and use of isolation in the academy, by strengthening the support provided for the small number of students who exhibit more challenging behaviour.
- Ensure governors check regularly on the progress of all students and on that of different groups of students across the year.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Well-being, Care and Learning for Newcastle upon Tyne, the Secretary of State for Education and the Chair of the Governing Body. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Evans
Her Majesty's Inspector