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19 June 2015

Mr J Morris
The Headteacher
Warden Park Academy
Broad Street
Cuckfield
Haywards Heath
RH17 5DP

Dear Mr Morris

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Warden Park Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 18 June 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 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 to gauge the impact of the academy's work to maintain high standards in students' behaviour.

Evidence

The inspector considered 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 of behaviour and attitudes identified at the previous inspection.

Context

Warden Park Academy is larger than the average-size secondary school, with 1,484 students on roll. Relatively few students join at times other than the start of Year 7, or leave before the end of Year 11. The proportion from minority ethnic groups is

below average and a relatively small number speaks English as an additional language. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is below average. The proportion with identified special educational needs, and specifically the proportion with a statement of special educational needs, is average. Staff turnover is low.

Behaviour and safety of students

Students show great pride in their academy. They speak of it as a 'happy' and 'friendly' community. Behaviour around the site before and after school, and at break and lunchtimes, is calm and orderly. Staff have trust and confidence in students' attitudes and demeanour; students respond by treating the pleasant green spaces and the well-kept courtyard areas around the academy with respect. They socialise happily with friends on the field, in the canteen and in corridors. There is little litter and no signs of mistreatment of the fabric of the building. Apart from the occasional shirt not tucked in, uniform is worn smartly and students respond quickly to staff's reminders, for example to wear blazers indoors as they come in from the field after break.

The split lunchtime makes for a relaxed environment at midday. Students manage the need to be quiet around the site whilst others work in classrooms. The beginnings of some lessons are delayed slightly due to a lack of punctuality by a few students, particularly to the first lesson in the afternoon.

The systems of points-based rewards and colour-coded sanctions are understood, applied consistently by staff, and are liked by students, who say that they help them to behave and learn well. Staff model respectful behaviour and require high standards. I heard one teacher speaking with a student about poor behaviour in class. The emphasis was on the student recognising that she had misbehaved, returning her to the classroom, and 'staying on green' for the remainder of the lesson.

Behaviour in lessons is very good. Students listen attentively to guidance and explanations from teachers, and clearly want to succeed and do their best. Many classrooms are characterised by positive and pleasant working relationships between students, and between students and teachers. At the end of one Year 7 science lesson, students had obviously been thrilled to see small creatures through microscopes and many said a cheerful 'thank you, Miss!' to their teacher as they left. Students speak of occasional misbehaviour in lessons, but of it being minor, rarely disrupting learning, and it being addressed effectively by staff. Sometimes, the willingness of students to carry out tasks given to them disguises an underlying lack of understanding of the point of the work. Students in some lessons did not question or challenge themselves, their friends, or the teacher well enough to be able to acquire a deep grasp of the work they were doing.

Attendance remains near the national average and is it appropriate that you have the aim of improving this through working with parents more closely to ensure that children are not kept home when they could be in school. Permanent exclusion rates remain low. The number of fixed term exclusions rose last year in response to even higher standards of behaviour being required of all students, but has fallen over the last three months. There are still relatively fewer exclusions here than average. The

new pastoral support hub provides valuable opportunities for students to make any necessary adjustments to their behaviour, and so remain in the academy and learning rather than be excluded. Staff in the hub are very attentive to the needs of all students and also use the facility as a means of providing a quiet and calm place for those who need such care and support.

There is very little bullying in the academy. Students are proud of the fact that relationship issues are limited to the occasional friendship problems. They feel very safe and well looked after in the academy. Students are confident that they would be supported here effectively, sensitively and thoughtfully with any problems they have. There are occasional unkind comments on social media, but they have little currency with the vast majority of students. The small number of parents who expressed their views on Parent View feels that the academy manages behaviour well and that their child is happy and successful here. Students are keen to celebrate diversity, but they do not always have the confidence and capacity to express themselves clearly and speak confidently about such issues.

There are some aspects of welfare and safeguarding procedures which require attention. I am pleased that you are currently in the process of refreshing the safeguarding policy which had passed its review date, and that you are also addressing some minor issues around the administration of the record of the vetting checks carried out on staff and other adults. You are aware that some other information on the website about care and welfare is out of date.

Priorities for further improvement

- Refresh the important information about the care and welfare of students on the website to present a more accurate and up-to-date picture of provision.
- Develop more opportunities for students to learn how to ask challenging questions of themselves and others, and probe their understanding of the work.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for West Sussex, to the Secretary of State for Education, the Regional Schools Commissioner, and the Chair of the Board of Directors. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alan Taylor-Bennett
Her Majesty's Inspector