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21 January 2016

Dr S Asong  
Headteacher  
Gable Hall School  
Southend Road  
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Essex  
SS17 8JT

Dear Dr Asong

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Gable Hall School**

Following my visit to your academy on 12 January 2016, 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 because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about behaviour at the academy.

### **Evidence**

The inspector considered evidence including:

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

## **Context**

This secondary school is much larger than average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have disabilities or special educational needs, including those who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care (EHC) plan, is broadly average. The proportion of pupils who leave the academy during the school year is low, and there was a 15% staff turnover in 2015, which was below the national average. The academy has difficulty in recruiting staff, particularly in science and mathematics.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Pupils arrive at the academy sensibly and are routinely greeted by members of staff at the entrance every morning. Pupils also leave the academy sensibly and are well supervised by members of staff. I observed pupils waiting patiently at the bus stops after school. Letters of praise from members of the public received by the academy also indicate that the vast majority of pupils behave very well when they are taking part in excursions.

Pupils are aware of the consequences of being late and both your attendance officer and the recently appointed home-school liaison officer have worked effectively to ensure that pupils' attendance as a whole is above the national average. However, pupils eligible for pupil premium funding and those who have an EHC plan attend less well than their peers.

Good staff presence around the academy ensures that pupils move around in an orderly fashion, although the canteen is prone to becoming crowded at breaktime, particularly during colder weather and when pupils prefer to remain indoors. I observed pupils socialising with each other well when seated, and staff interacting positively with pupils when they queued to purchase their food. Pupils typically show respect for their academy environment. There was no evidence of graffiti around the building, including in the pupils' toilets, although I observed a few pupils drop small amounts of litter at the end of their morning break.

Pupils' attitudes in lessons remain positive when the teaching engages their interest. I observed all groups of pupils engage in their learning in the majority of lessons I visited, and they were encouraged to re-engage by teachers and teaching assistants when their concentration was at risk of waning. Pupils told me that there are still some incidents of low-level disruptive behaviour which at times act as a barrier to learning. These include losing concentration, talking when the teacher is talking or slouching over the desk.

You are aware of this low-level disruptive behaviour and have rightly identified that it is linked to the quality of teaching and you know when it is likely to occur. By

supporting the identified teachers and closely monitoring the behaviour of particular classes, you have identified trends and deployed suitable strategies to reduce such incidents. Your behaviour policy contains useful appendices which help teachers to identify what constitutes unacceptable behaviour and provide them with guidance on how to prevent poor behaviour from featuring in their lessons. Your own surveys of parents' views indicate that the majority of those who respond are satisfied with the academy's actions to ensure that pupils are well behaved.

You closely monitor the numbers of incidents relating to behaviour, including homophobic bullying and racist behaviour. In their discussions with me, pupils had strong views about the importance of tolerance and equality. I witnessed pupils from minority ethnic groups mixing well with the White British majority of pupils. Although bullying exists, pupils told me that they are clear about how to go about reporting this. Some feel that the matters raised could be resolved more quickly, although others were positive about the academy's actions to rectify the matter. Pupils are taught well about how to keep themselves safe, particularly when using the internet. You also reward pupils for behaving well and being good role models to others. Your behaviour card system, which requires every pupil to carry the card and place it on the desk at the start of the lesson, is welcomed by the majority. This leads to rewards for showing respect and integrity, and has helped to raise the expectations that teachers have of pupils and that pupils have of themselves.

Regular meetings between key members of staff ensure that behaviour and attendance remain at the top of the agenda. Your systems for recording behavioural incidents ensure that appropriate support and intervention are put in place. You report to the governing body regularly on matters relating to behaviour and attendance through your detailed headteacher's report. You also make effective use of this information to inform your self-evaluation summary of the academy's overall effectiveness. You have reviewed the way you record behavioural incidents from September 2015 in order to make them tighter. You have also raised your expectations about what constitutes acceptable behaviour and pupils now know that their actions will have consequences. Consequently, figures indicate that recorded incidents have increased, as is to be expected in response to the more stringent approach. However, this is now stabilising and pupils are clear about what is and is not acceptable both inside and outside of the classroom. The academy has strict rules about uniform and behaviour. Although pupils comment that the academy has become more rigorous in the implementation of its behaviour code, they understand why and see the longer-term benefits. Some pupils report that not all teachers implement the classroom sanctions system consistently and feel that this is unfair.

Your systems for keeping pupils safe in school are well established and systematic. You maintain the single central record of recruitment checks of staff well and check its compliance on a monthly basis.

Pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 who attend off-site provision attend regularly, and have positive attitudes towards their learning. The majority make good progress.

The isolation rooms are used appropriately when pupils are in breach of the academy rules. Academy leaders act quickly when a pupil breaks the rules, and pupils are provided with time to reflect on their actions before being reintegrated into lessons. Pupils with previously challenging behaviour who met with me were positive about the academy's actions in helping them to rectify their poor behaviour. While some still have anger management problems, they told me that their behaviour has certainly improved and that they find the mentoring provided by the local chaplaincy particularly helpful. Permanent exclusions are almost non-existent, and the proportion of pupils who are excluded for fixed periods of time is well below the national average.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- tackle the small amount of low-level disruptive behaviour which features in lessons where teaching is weaker
- ensure that all teachers implement the classroom code of conduct consistently
- improve the attendance of pupils eligible for the pupil premium and those who have an EHC plan.

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

Yours sincerely

John Daniell  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**