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17 February 2016

Mrs S Banks  
Headteacher  
Isambard Community School  
The Learning Campus  
Redhouse Way  
Swindon  
Wiltshire  
SN29 2ND

Dear Mrs Banks

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Isambard Community School**

Following my visit to your school on 25 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 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 school.

### **Evidence**

I observed pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning:

- as they arrived at school
- during lessons
- during breaktime and lunchtime
- as they moved around the school.

I held discussions with you, the deputy headteacher, the pastoral manager, the lead student support assistant, the data officer, the attendance officer and four heads of year. I met with two groups of pupils, one from Key Stage 3 and one from Key Stage 4, and had informal talks with pupils at break and lunchtimes and with the canteen supervisors. I also talked to the link officer from the local authority and with two of your governors. I scrutinised school documentation relating to behaviour and safety, including incident logs, attendance data and reports to the governing body.

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

Leaders and managers have taken effective action to improve behaviour and secure consistently positive attitudes to learning.

## **Context**

Isambard Community School is a larger than average-sized secondary school with 1072 pupils on roll, aged 11–16. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who are learning English as an additional language is below the national average, although this is increasing. Fewer pupils than average are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for children who are looked after by the local authority). The proportion of pupils with a statement of educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below the national average. A slightly higher proportion of pupils than average receive support for their special educational needs. Almost a fifth of the teaching staff left during the last academic year and although recruitment was difficult, all posts were filled with suitably qualified specialist staff.

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

Pupils generally behave well in lessons. They show interest in what they are learning, participate willingly in discussions and help one another when they encounter difficulties. Most take pride in their work and the presentation in their books is for the most part good. In a Year 10 lesson on the threats posed by extremism, pupils were fully engaged in a challenging debate on the best ways to educate parents and the public on the dangers of social media. However, when lessons are less interesting or when there is a slow change from one activity to another, a small minority of pupils become restless, lose their concentration and at times call out. This is particularly noticeable when they are taught by temporary teachers.

The vast majority of pupils arrive at school punctually and arrive for lessons on time after breaktime and lunch. They move around the site sensibly, although there is some crowding on the stairwells, when some pushing takes place. The school is well aware of this and plans were explained in a Year 7 assembly of a new one-way system which is to be introduced. Pupils here listened very attentively, and well-established routines and high expectations of how they should behave in assembly have been established.

Good relationships exist between teachers and pupils at the school. Teachers have a high visibility in the corridors, dining room, inside communal areas and outside areas before school, during breaktime and lunch. This ensures an orderly start to the day and lessons. Most pupils exercise self-discipline and there is little obvious need for staff supervision. In the dining room, pupils line up in an orderly manner to buy food and clear up after themselves. The support staff from the dining room are positive about the pupils' behaviour.

Pupils generally have good attitudes to learning, although this is more evident in Years 10 and 11 than in the lower years. They all express pride in the school building, which has colourful displays on the walls. A fragile art display in one vestibule is clearly respected. There is little litter around the site, although the pupils

remarked that they are constantly being reminded of the need to use the bins and that at times they do not always do so.

The introduction of the revised behaviour for learning policy with its consequences is fully understood by the pupils and has improved behaviour for all year groups. However, it is not applied totally consistently by staff, with some teachers applying the first level of consequence for a misdemeanour which other teachers disregard. Pupils are acutely aware of this. The system is managed well and weekly reports inform heads of year which pupils have been awarded consequences. They follow these up assiduously with curriculum leaders and form tutors, applying sanctions or support as necessary. Heads of year analyse the data regularly, as does the special educational needs coordinator, to establish trends and to determine further needs in terms of behaviour management. Although a system for rewards exists in the form of Brunel points, there is a current imbalance between the use of rewards compared with the use of sanctions. Pupils in the lower years are of the opinion that they are insufficiently rewarded by the entry of their points into a raffle for one prize. The school is considering extending the current system. Students report that Brunel points are not generally issued in Years 10 and 11 and therefore the reward system is currently ineffective for these pupils

Pupils report that they feel safe in school and are confident that any bullying is dealt with quickly. They note a zero tolerance approach by staff to name calling, racism or homophobic remarks. However, they say that some pupils use bad language when playing on the multi-use games area or artificial grass pitch where they are out of the earshot of staff. Pupils are able to explain how to keep themselves safe online and know about dangers on the railway, road and from over-exposure to the sun. They have confidence in the behaviour systems and Years 10 and 11 are vociferous in stating that behaviour has improved in the past two years.

Attendance has increased during this academic year and at 95.8% is now above the national average. Any absence is followed up immediately, and regular contact is made with parents when there are concerns. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent has also reduced this year. Heads of year and the school's attendance officer pay home visits, support pupils who are finding regular attendance difficult and use help from outside agencies effectively. Attendance figures are analysed weekly, although this data is not reported to show the attendance of separate pupil groups such those who have special educational needs or disability, and disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium.

Exclusions for a fixed term period in the year 2014–2015 were higher than national, especially for pupils who have special educational needs. These have now reduced as a result of the school exploring alternative ways of managing the behaviour of some of these pupils. The introduction of the intervention room, earlier support, more mentoring, alternative curriculum provision and the use of counsellors and mental health professional support has had a significant impact. The school uses permanent exclusion as the last resort. There has been one permanent exclusion in this academic year. This is for a very serious offence and is fully justified.

The governing body is fully aware of the impact of the behaviour for learning system and its welfare committee receives regular reports on incidents, attendance and exclusions. It holds the school to account for this area of its work well. However, it

does not receive reports which are broken down by pupil grouping and this inhibits it being able to ask questions about provision for these pupils. The review dates for some policies on the school's website are out of date and the policy on attendance does not reflect the national figures accurately.

In 2015, pupils in Year 11 did not make sufficient progress. The proportion of pupils who achieved five higher grade GCSEs including English and mathematics declined from 2014. These results were affected by the long-standing early entry policy of the school which has now been remedied. The school predicts that attainment will rise in 2016 and better progress will be made. Nevertheless, the legacy of the early entry, and the use of some subjects which will not count in the performance tables, will affect the overall results.

The local authority provides regular support to the school, but this has to date made little impact on pupils' outcomes, which remain too low.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- provide further training for staff in behaviour management to improve consistency in the way consequences are applied and to ensure pupils do not lose focus when there is a change of activity
- ensure that reports on behaviour, attendance and exclusions always include analysis of the impact on different pupil groupings, including those who have special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium
- revise the use of rewards for all pupils in the school so that these provide further encouragement for pupils to behave well and do their best
- update the website to ensure that all policies and information are current.

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

Yours sincerely

**Marcia Headon**  
**Ofsted Inspector**