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25 February 2016

Ms Jenny Nimmo
Head of School
TBAP Cambridge AP Academy
Ascham Road
Cambridge
Cambridgeshire
CB4 2BD

Dear Ms Nimmo

No formal designation monitoring inspection of TBAP Cambridge AP Academy

Following my visit to your school on 3 February 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 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 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about behaviour at the school.

Evidence

I considered evidence that included:

- 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 school leaders and staff.

Having evaluated 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

The school has been open for four months and is part of the Tri-Borough Alternative Provision Trust (TBAP), a multi-academy trust. Since TBAP took responsibility for the premises, accommodation, staff and pupils of the pupil referral unit, there have been significant changes to staffing and curricular arrangements.

There are 36 pupils on roll. All pupils have social, emotional or mental health needs. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Twenty-one pupils are in Year 11 and others are in Years 9 and 10.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The transition from a pupil referral unit to a school has been difficult for staff and pupils. A lot has changed. Senior leaders and the trust identified right from the start that significant changes had to happen to improve pupils' behaviour and academic achievement. The actions taken are appropriate but the changes have not been whole-heartedly supported by the pupils or staff. The enormity of the changes created uncertainty and anxiety for staff and pupils. Many staff left, which created instability. This instability, together with higher expectations of pupils' conduct and attendance, led to a deterioration of some pupils' behaviour. Almost all of the vacancies are now filled with permanent staff. Staff believe that, given more time, the changes will result in the improvements required. The trust believes that, by the end of this academic year, pupils' behaviour and achievement will improve significantly. It is too soon to judge the difference that changes will make to the pupils but the changes are appropriate.

Staff welcome and value the support from the trust and from other academies in the trust, particularly the increased support provided recently in response to the deteriorating behaviour of some pupils. The behaviour policy is applied consistently and staff feel well supported by the senior team. When pupils' behaviour deteriorates, staff know what to do and are suitably trained to respond appropriately. As a result, the behaviour of some pupils has improved. Others still find it difficult to work within the higher expectations and their behaviour is not good enough.

There have been times during the school's short history when pupils' behaviour has compromised their personal safety and the safety of staff. Discussions with staff and pupils, together with records of incidents, indicate that pupils who joined the school after October 2015 often behave better than those who transferred from the pupil referral unit. During this inspection, pupils' attitudes were often good when working with staff individually or in pairs. When in groups, especially at breaktimes, pupils' language and attitudes deteriorated. When incidents occurred and staff intervened, pupils were quick to take a look, although they then quickly resumed their play or

learning. Discussions with staff indicate that this is an improvement from previous occasions, when pupils would join in and make matters worse.

Senior staff and the trust acknowledge that there are too many temporary exclusions. Some exclusions are for serious incidents, such as physical assault and extensive damage to property. However, most exclusions are for less than two days at a time and the use of exclusion is starting to reduce the incidence of some inappropriate behaviour, such as smoking on site and refusing to go to lessons. Plans are in place so that, in the near future, most inappropriate behaviour is managed without excluding pupils.

There are mixed views among staff about how they feel about their own safety, particularly when pupils break windows. Pupils say that they feel safe.

The actions taken have successfully established the importance of learning and good behaviour. The changes are starting to make a difference to pupils and staff.

- Pupils now attend full time. Having been used to part-time programmes, some pupils have found this difficult. Although some pupils are too late on too many days, others are on time, attend each day and participate fully in lessons.
- Changes to the curriculum mean that pupils study for a suitable range of qualifications that are at the right level for their ability. Pupils generally like the subjects, especially the practical ones.
- Almost all pupils now respect the new code of conduct, including wearing the school's uniform and handing in mobile phones and cigarettes.
- The recent addition of three senior leaders has increased the potential to support staff and pupils. These leaders bring a wealth of experience and knowledge. They are already respected by staff for their support and for the way that they model effective management of pupils' behaviour.

The premises and accommodation do not provide pupils or staff with the high-quality educational resources that they are entitled to. In addition, the nature of the premises and accommodation increase the risk of harm to pupils and staff. However, the risks are assessed appropriately, and high levels of supervision and vigilance minimise the risks as much as possible. A meeting between the trust and the local authority is about to take place to discuss these issues. The issues include:

- the exterior walls and doors of most classrooms are made almost entirely of glass and the glass is not shatterproof
- most classrooms are not attached to the main building and doors open directly on to the playground

- the playground is not separated from the car park
- there are no suitable facilities for assembly, dining, indoor physical education or practical science lessons.

Some areas of the school's work observed during this inspection require further consideration in order to maximise the opportunities to improve pupils' behaviour and learning. For example:

- some staff gave too little attention to pupils that were behaving appropriately
- tutor time was not always calm or productive
- staff did not always expect pupils to get to class on time and learning time was lost
- pupils did not have enough to do at playtimes and wandered around in groups rather than interacting with adults.

Priorities for further improvement

- Reward appropriate behaviour frequently and sufficiently.
- Reconsider the use of tutor time.
- Make sure that lessons start on time.
- Provide pupils with good opportunities to play cooperatively.
- Resolve issues about the condition and suitability of the premises and accommodation as a matter of urgency.

I am copying this letter to the trust, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Cambridgeshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Heather Yaxley
Her Majesty's Inspector