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21 October 2015

Mr Simon Potten  
Headteacher  
Oakwood School  
Balcombe Road  
Horley  
Surrey  
RH6 9AE

Dear Mr Potten

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Oakwood School**

Following my visit with Helena Read HMI to your school on 29 September 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This unannounced 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 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about behaviour and welfare of pupils at the school.

### **Evidence**

Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) observed students' behaviour:

- as they arrived at and left the school
- during lessons in all year groups and most subjects
- in an assembly and tutorial periods at the start of the day
- as they moved around the school and at breaktimes.

HMI held discussions with staff, including senior leaders and those responsible for attendance, behaviour and the Access to Learning (ALF) faculty. They spoke with groups of students, formally and informally. HMI met the chair of governors and a representative of the local authority. They also scrutinised key school documents, including plans and policies, and records concerning students' attendance and behaviour.

Having considered 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 school's previous inspection.

## **Context**

This is a comprehensive school with 899 students, aged 11–16, on roll. You became the headteacher on 1 September 2015. Most students are White British. Fewer students than average are entitled to free school meals. A higher than average proportion is included in the register of special educational needs.

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

As was the case at the school's last inspection in 2013, students generally behave sensibly and attentively in lessons. They are punctual at the start of the day and after breaks. They listen to their teachers, help each other and show commitment to their work. In the Year 11 history and geography lessons observed, students paid rapt attention because of the interesting and well-presented subject matter. However, when the teaching is less interesting and engaging, some students become inattentive and disruptive at a low level. They call out, for example. The content of the tutorial periods at the start of the day was less focused and purposeful than the lessons observed later on. Students behaved less well and inattentively in these tutorials than in most lessons observed. This made a slow start to the school day for many. A Year 10 assembly, conversely, was well paced and informative. It offered students clear teaching about British values, including the rule of law and respect for self and others, linked helpfully to their own lives. The students listened attentively.

Students move safely around the school. They are polite and friendly. They habitually tidy up their litter; school routines are well established. Occasionally, there is a little too much noise in corridors and stairwells. Teachers supervise appropriately but not excessively, with students generally showing appropriate self-discipline. The sometimes long queues for food are managed effectively and orderly. Teachers carefully ensure the safety of students at the end of the day by encouraging the correct use of a pedestrian crossing at the school gate, for example.

Well-organised teams of staff link closely together to achieve the school's broad aim of ensuring that students, when experiencing any difficulties, are valued, respected and able to take part fully in the curriculum. This work is ambitious. It starts with tutors and year leaders and, as needed, more specialist support, and contributes to good behaviour. Student services is a very effective department. Students speak very highly of its work in helping them to overcome any problems they face. Its staff go the extra mile by, for example, attending educational visits when students need this, to help them get the most from these. The access to learning faculty, known

affectionately as ALF, is very well led and organised. It proactively and expertly ensures that students who become vulnerable are catered for well. The students' needs are sharply understood and addressed very well. HMI found many examples of this. Staff hear the views of the students, and their parents, clearly. This leads to precise and effective plans, which are put into practice well. Students spoke movingly of the positive difference this support has made to them.

The school's anti-bullying systems are clear and well organised. Students are aware of occasional bullying but agree that it is dealt with successfully. When HMI asked for information about specific incidents they had heard about, the school immediately provided audit trails, or records, showing how they were properly resolved. The rate of exclusions has reduced from what was a high number a few years ago.

The school also has suitable systems for promoting good attendance, which continues, as at the last inspection, to be at about the national average. Staff assiduously monitor any patterns around students' absences, and report on these clearly to governors. For example, the school has identified that older female students with welfare concerns may be less likely to attend than other groups. Thus, the school arranged a multi-agency conference in response to this for partners, including nearby primary schools. Last year, the school started a young carers' support group.

The school's procedures for safeguarding students are thorough; there is a definite culture of keeping students safe on- and off-site. Students generally feel the school is physically and emotionally secure for them. Staff know how to refer any concerns. The school works appropriately with external agencies, following up with them if necessary. Safety issues, including e-safety, are included in the curriculum. Students who met with HMI explained clearly key ways in which they can keep themselves safe online.

Students notice recent improvements in behaviour this term. The new policies that you have introduced, on mobile phones and uniform shoes, have been accepted well. One student said 'I don't like it but it's fair'. Students find the rules reasonable as they understand the underlying reasons for them. Staff upheld the new rules firmly, but kindly, with students at the end of the day. They avoided confrontation.

Students feel that sanctions for poor behaviour are usually applied fairly by staff. They are equally clear that rewards for good behaviour or work are not given consistently. They identify that teachers do not all have similar standards and expectations. The school's behaviour for learning policy contains many sensible principles and aspirations. We agreed that it should be revised and updated so that it explains more clearly to staff when to apply rewards and sanctions, and what offences lead to exclusion.

Many students continue to carry out diligently worthwhile responsibilities as peer mentors, members of the school council, school tour guides and prefects. The

students who met with HMI saw the appointment processes for these roles as useful to their learning, and fair. HMI saw clear evidence of older students carrying out with empathy a special duty to look after younger students. In a physical education lesson, some students began to take charge as budding netball umpires.

Academic attainment has dropped in the past two years. We agree that students can do, and should do, better. HMI observed different styles of teaching and behaviour management in lessons, some of which did not sustain the students' interest. The students' existing generally positive behaviour needs to be further improved, so that they are keen at all times, with fewer lapses in lessons that are less challenging or engaging.

### **External support**

The local authority has a positive relationship with the school. It points out that the school responded well to some previous parental concerns about behaviour. Officers have agreed to provide some additional advisory support to the school this year. They have further usefully agreed that this will, in part, support the school in ensuring that behaviour management is made more fully consistent across the school.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- build consistently high aspirations by staff in their teaching and behaviour management
- consider revising the format and/or purpose of tutorial periods, so there is a zestier start to the school day
- revise the behaviour policy so that it promotes greater consistency in the teachers' use of rewards for good behaviour and work.

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

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton

**Her Majesty's Inspector**