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Simon Pullen
Headteacher
The Royal Harbour Academy
Newlands Lane
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Dear Mr Pullen

No formal designation monitoring inspection of The Royal Harbour Academy

Following my visit to your school on 28 and 29 September 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 of Education, Children's Services and Skills was concerned about behaviour at the school.

Evidence

Inspectors considered evidence that included:

- observations of pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning in lessons
- observations of pupils' behaviour throughout the day, including discussions 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 maintain the high standards of behaviour and attitudes identified at the school's previous inspection.

Context

Much has changed at the school since the previous inspection. In September 2015, the Marlowe Academy closed and Ellington and Hereson School expanded to incorporate the Marlowe Academy site, pupils and staff. The expanded Ellington and Hereson School was renamed the Royal Harbour Academy and leaders and governors embarked upon the process of becoming a sponsored academy by joining the Coastal Academies Trust (CAT). At the time of this inspection, this process is still ongoing and no date has yet been published by the Department for Education for conversion to academy status. Making use of both sites, the school is currently maintained by the local authority and receives support from the CAT.

The Royal Harbour Academy is an average-sized secondary school with a sixth form. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than is seen typically. There were some changes in staffing following the expansion of the school, but staffing is now stable and the senior leadership team has been strengthened.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The headteacher's determined leadership and clear vision have enabled staff, governors, pupils and parents to cope well with some extremely challenging and difficult circumstances since the previous inspection. Leaders have implemented effective behaviour management and reward systems across both sites which are well understood by pupils and staff. Pupils notice the differences that these systems have made and feel that the current system is fairer and more consistently applied. Staff value the training and support that they receive from senior leaders and they recognise the improvements to behaviour across the school. Pupils are confident, feel a sense of belonging and value the friends that they make here. There is a genuine sense of pride in the school, as one Year 11 explained, 'We don't think of it being two schools any more, it's one school; our school'.

Senior leaders, staff and governors rightly prioritise pupils' safety and welfare. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, there is a caring culture of vigilance and accurate and detailed records are kept. Appropriate checks are made against all adults who work with pupils. Staff receive regular and relevant training on safeguarding with an appropriate focus on maintaining awareness of radicalisation and e-safety. Effective communication between key staff and other agencies ensures timely and effective support for pupils of concern, and reviews of the impact of any actions taken.

House leaders integrate their work well with the behaviour team and subject leaders to ensure that agreed behaviour systems are implemented consistently, yet staff are

flexible enough to support the specific needs of individual pupils. There is a clear expectation that pupils should be in lessons and learning. The behaviour team are particularly effective at supporting the emotional needs of individuals to ensure that any challenging behaviour is addressed quickly to minimise disruption to learning. Teaching staff work well together in their teams to share resources and ideas to support improvements to behaviour management and teaching. Leaders are currently implementing a more structured system to share these examples of best practice across the school.

The school's inclusion unit, the Aces Centre, is a particular strength and very effectively supports vulnerable pupils and those who are struggling to attend the main school on a full-time basis. As a result, the behaviour and attendance of these pupils have improved. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about their achievements and their sincere respect for the leader of the centre. Several of them were keen to share how much they appreciate how staff go the extra mile to provide a wide range of engaging trips, visits and learning activities. One pupil adeptly summed up the ethos of the Aces Centre by explaining to inspectors, 'It's like a family, you're made to feel welcome and everyone supports each other'.

Pupils behave well and move safely around both the upper school and lower school sites. They arrive promptly in the morning and, during the visit, nearly all came into the buildings and presented themselves for their first lessons in a well-ordered and calm way. At break and lunchtimes pupils socialise in small groups indoors and outside on the field and the vast majority enjoy their time and get on well together. When pupils move around the school to go out to, and return from, break or lunchtime or to change lessons, they are well supervised by adults who remind them to move sensibly and calmly around the school. Nearly all of the pupils respond quickly and smartly. In a very few areas of the school, such as the corridor leading to the upper school field, there was no adult supervision or the adult supervision was less effective. Where this occurs, the behaviour of a minority of pupils becomes loud and boisterous and there was some evidence of litter. More should be done to share the most effective methods of behaviour management and improve the level of supervision in these pinch-point areas.

The school curriculum has a focus on community, team work and working together which helps to ensure that pupils and sixth formers are actively engaged in the life of the school. In addition, leaders also ensure that strong relationships with alternative providers help to ensure that the needs of a small group of vulnerable pupils are met through a range of bespoke alternative provision and interventions.

Nearly all pupils are attentive in class, listen to their teachers and show a commitment to their studies. Good relationships between pupils and staff were seen to promote interest in lessons. Most pupils are confident to explain their work to visitors, are ambitious and take a pride in their work. For example, in a Year 11 mathematics lesson, pupils were keen to quiz the teacher to see how they could gain maximum marks in the GCSE style question they were working on.

Well-developed school systems challenge and support pupils whose attendance is not regular enough. Routine monitoring quickly identifies patterns of non-attendance and leaders ensure that a range of approaches are used to help get these pupils to and keep them in lessons. This approach is improving attendance but there is still more to do; overall attendance is still below national figures and the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is still below that of their peers.

Priorities for further improvement

- Continue to ensure that the best ideas and resources to support improvements to behaviour management, teaching and learning are shared across the school.
- Ensure that the supervision of pupils during break and lunchtime is of consistently high quality across the school.
- Continue to improve rates of attendance, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Newberry
Her Majesty's Inspector