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Mr Rob Reed
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Reed

Unannounced behaviour inspection of Hove Park School and Sixth Form Centre

Following my visit with Catherine Old, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 4 October 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This 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 the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, aspects of the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school and the behaviour and welfare of pupils.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. Inspectors met regularly with senior leaders, a representative of the local authority and members of the governing body. The chair of governors was on leave at the time of the inspection. A telephone conversation was conducted with the governor responsible for safeguarding. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour before school, during break and lunchtimes, after school, in lessons and around both campuses. Inspectors met with three groups of pupils, including students following 16–19 study programmes in HP6 (Hove Park sixth form). Inspectors discussed arrangements for welfare, pastoral care, child protection and safeguarding with the team of special educational needs coordinators. Inspectors discussed with senior leaders pupils' attendance, some pupils' persistent absence and case studies of pupils who have been excluded from the school.

Having considered 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

Hove Park School and Sixth Form Centre is a larger than average school with 1,535 pupils currently on roll, of whom 190 are following 16–19 study programmes. Provision for 16–19 study programmes is shared with another local school. Three quarters of the pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups varies from year to year, with mixed background pupils the largest single designation. Nearly a fifth of pupils speak English as an additional language; the proportion of disadvantaged pupils is just above the national average; the proportion of pupils included in the register of special educational needs is above the national average while the proportion subject to an education, health and care plan or with a statement is below the national average. The school is affected by the high mobility rate of pupils leaving or joining the school mid-year. Staff are required to move between the campuses in order to fulfil the requirements of their timetable. Each year small groups of pupils benefit from alternative placements with Blatchington Mill School and Sixth Form College, The Forest School within Plumpton College, Brighton and Hove's local authority pupil referral unit, City College and Northbrook. Hove Park School and Sixth Form Centre manages its own internal alternative provision known as Short Stay school. The headteacher was appointed after a short period of turbulence in the leadership of the school in the summer of 2015.

You responded extremely well when this inspection was announced. You cooperated with the team in a professional and courteous manner. The team noticed that your approach was adopted by all your staff admirably. The team also saw leaders and teachers dealing with pupils and parents in this way, such that good examples of how to behave were provided for all pupils to follow.

Leaders were able to address quickly the reasons why this inspection had been commissioned. You provided the team with strong evidence of the work undertaken to address parents' concerns. Leaders were utterly open and honest about the challenges that the school faces. You were very clear that the persistent absence of a tiny minority of pupils, especially those who are vulnerable, is of concern to you. We agreed that the evidence shows that a handful of these pupils' absence has a deleterious impact on published rates of attendance. You also provided the team with detailed evidence of the full range of actions you have taken to address this. We agreed that the attendance of the vast majority of pupils compares well with attendance rates of pupils in other schools nationally.

You also provided compelling evidence that leaders and teachers take seriously any allegation of bullying. Pupils told the team that bullying still happens occasionally despite your best efforts. It was disappointing that a few pupils commented, 'that's what you get everywhere'. However, you showed that at Hove Park you will work tirelessly to minimise the impact of bullying and address firmly any instances where it occurs. It was a privilege to meet pupils who have been able to overcome bullying with the school's help. The range of strategies, like these, to support vulnerable young people or those facing challenge is impressive. Inspectors visited the 'hut', the Phoenix centre and Short Stay school and found them all to be effective.

Inspectors found the school to have developed a wide range of provision aimed at promoting positive mental health and overall pupil well-being. You have created a very strong pastoral care system in the school. Managers of this aspect of the school are confident in their roles and perform their duties well. All staff contribute to a culture in the school that actively supports the development of young people's diverse sexual identities. This is positive. The school's work to promote diversity and inclusion across the broad range of minority ethnic groups is less well developed. For example, leaders provided evidence of a small number of racist incidents over the last year. Leaders also shared appropriately robust actions taken in response to such incidents.

You showed the team that serious behavioural incidents are rare. I was also privileged to meet a few pupils whose behaviour has been transformed by the school's actions. They were refreshingly frank in their responses. They were also positively grateful to several members of staff who have helped improve their conduct and attitudes to school.

The vast majority of pupils behave extremely well. Pupils in the upper school exhibit good attitudes to learning. They conduct themselves well around the extensive site and make the best of some poor accommodation. The canteen is in urgent need of repair or replacement. You showed me plans for the necessary work, to be completed in 2017. Pupils wear their uniform with pride. Staff challenge any whose attire is not consistent with the reasonable expectations of how it should be worn. Pupils move between lessons quickly and quietly. Pupils arrive at school in good time and are supervised well. This is particularly important on the Valley Campus where cars enter the premises through the same gate.

At break and lunchtimes, the campuses are supervised well so that pupils remain safe. Senior leaders are constantly out and about ensuring that good order is maintained all the time. The team observed a few pupils whose conduct in lessons fell short of the school's high expectations. This was noticed more at the Valley Campus and in lessons where pupils were not fully engaged in learning. Overall, however, behaviour across the school is good.

All teachers apply the school's behaviour framework as appropriate. Inspectors noted that a few teachers use the first stage sooner than others, which creates

some inconsistency in the system. Overall, though, the universal application of this aspect of the behaviour management policy contributes effectively to the promotion of good behaviour across the school.

Four key policies relating to behaviour management and safeguarding, on the website, were out of date prior to the inspection. Senior leaders showed updated versions that have been agreed by the governors. All are now compliant with the latest guidance for such documents. You recognised the need to publish the revised editions as soon as possible. Governors were adamant that they would check to make sure this happens.

Governors are also determined to continue positive work to build purposeful and productive relationships with parents. They support your introduction of a headteacher's surgery which enables parents to meet with you informally on a regular basis. They have revised and upgraded the complaints policy so parents with well-founded concerns understand the process that they should follow. You intend that the publication of this process, as well as the surgery, will mean that the tiny minority of parents who have not felt listened to in the past is reduced further.

Leaders and governors work together to ensure that all pupils remain safe. Leaders take seriously their responsibility to recruit only those suitable to work with children and young people. Leaders' checks on adults seeking to work or volunteer at the school are rigorous. Leaders also ensure that staff are trained in safeguarding in keeping with the Secretary of State's requirements. Recently staff have, for example, received online update training on 'Keeping children safe in education'. They are also aware of their responsibilities within the 'Prevent' agenda and are trained to be watchful for signs of young people at risk. This includes young people potentially at risk of radicalisation.

External support

Hove Park School and Sixth Form Centre is supported well by members of the local authority's staff. Brighton and Hove's multi-agency safeguarding team provide useful model policies and exemplar material to support the school's work in this area. Local authority personnel are able to account accurately for the school's work on pupils' attendance, its attempts to tackle persistent absence and its effort to reduce exclusions. The local authority supports the development of cooperation between the city's secondary schools so that vulnerable pupils, for the most part, are safeguarded. A recent example of positive support from the local authority was a staff training session on 'Being a British Muslim in School', led by members of the ethnic minority advisory service. This work was commissioned because you recognise the need to extend the school's strong work relating to gender diversity to issues relating to race and ethnicity.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that all policies relating to behaviour and safeguarding are reviewed regularly, updated accordingly and published in a timely manner.
- Redouble efforts to promote and support better attendance and reduce persistent absence of a minority of vulnerable pupils.
- Embed further the good work in relation to diversity and inclusion that already exists, with particular attention to race and ethnicity.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for Brighton and Hove. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dr Simon Hughes
Her Majesty's Inspector