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7 November 2016

Louise Jackson  
Headteacher  
Great Yarmouth (VA) High School  
Salisbury Road  
Great Yarmouth  
Norfolk  
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Dear Miss Jackson

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Great Yarmouth (VA) High School**

Following my visit with Paul Brooker, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 20 October, 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 behaviour and safety of pupils at the school.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements and met with the headteacher and other staff, groups of pupils, and members of the interim executive board and the chief executive of a multi-academy trust that has been providing support to the school this term.

We carried out a tour of the school and visited a range of lessons and other aspects of provision. We observed pupils' behaviour around the school at breaks and between lessons. There have been no further responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, since the previous inspection.

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

The school's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements, but the school's culture of behaviour and promotion of a safe environment for pupils remains inadequate.

## **Context**

Having started in September, the current headteacher has been in post just over six weeks, and is the fourth headteacher in 18 months. The delegated powers of the governing body were removed in January 2016. At this point, the governing body was replaced by an interim executive board. A new interim executive board was formed in September 2016. A significant number of staff, including the whole mathematics department, left at the end of the summer term. Most mathematics classes are covered by temporary and supply teachers.

The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding (government funding intended to support pupils who are eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority) is significantly greater than the national average. Around one quarter of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Just over one in five pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is much higher than the national average. The school does not provide any off-site training.

The school is currently engaged in a process to consider conversion to academy status.

## **Inspection findings**

Current leaders recognise that pupil attendance is at the heart of keeping them safe. Since September, rigorous and robust systems have been introduced to monitor pupil attendance. Leaders are now aware of which pupils are in school and they check attendance at each lesson. These systems have been running for only a few weeks. The school's monitoring information suggests that attendance is slightly better than it was for the first half of the autumn term in 2015, but the school cannot guarantee the accuracy of any information collected before September 2016. It is clear from the current information that attendance is too low and for some groups of pupils, particularly those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, attendance is especially low. Leaders have introduced rigorous systems to check attendance in lessons so that staff now know where pupils are.

In the last few weeks leaders have enforced rules about turning up to school on time. Pupils know that they will face a sanction for lateness. This is having a positive impact. However, some pupils lack a sense of purpose when walking between lessons, behave inappropriately in the corridors and arrive at lessons late. Some staff try to encourage pupils to move more quickly and to smarten their appearance, but they are not well supported by colleagues.

Since September the school has adopted a new and sensible behaviour policy. Pupils told inspectors that 'the headteacher's new behaviour policy is clear'; sanctions are better balanced by achievement awards, and pupils know that there will be rapid

and consistent consequences for misbehaviour. Pupils also said that most staff are implementing the new behaviour policy and that fighting is much less common. Nonetheless, observations of lessons and breaktimes provided inspectors with little evidence to suggest that pupils' behaviour has improved since the last inspection. Staff and pupils accept too much boisterous and disrespectful behaviour. The casual use of derogatory language is accepted by many pupils as the norm and, more worryingly, some pupils say that they do not report this to staff because they have little confidence that their concerns will be resolved. Pupils' attitudes to learning remain inadequate; inspectors visited classrooms where some pupils did no work throughout the lesson.

The view of senior leaders and members of the interim executive board (IEB) is that behaviour has not improved since the previous inspection six months ago. A recent review commissioned by leaders concluded that 'Attitudes to learning are poor, and teachers were having to work extremely hard to achieve a satisfactory response... The situation in mathematics is desperate.' There has been training for teachers at the start of this term on behaviour management, but the reliance on too many temporary and cover staff has negated its impact.

The school does not have a consistent approach to recording or monitoring bullying incidents and is unable to evaluate the effectiveness of its policies. Discussions with pupils indicate that cases of bullying and intimidation are substantially under-recorded. As a result, leaders are unable to analyse the nature and frequency of incidents linked to groups of pupils such as those with protected characteristics, for example linked to race religion or sexual orientation. The school has put into place a new anti-bullying policy this term. None existed until this term.

The school has taken action to reduce the extremely high level of exclusions. While exclusions are used as part of the behaviour policy, leaders now have more options to keep pupils in school such as through internal isolation.

## **Leadership and management**

This inspection focused on pupils' safeguarding and behaviour. To do this, inspectors gathered evidence on the impact of the work of leaders to improve pupils' welfare and safety.

Since starting in September, the headteacher has provided decisive leadership in setting a direction for improvement. She has a clear grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The impact of her actions is difficult to see because most changes are recent and are not implemented consistently by all staff. There is insufficient strength in leadership to manage the consistent implementation of school policies. Uncertainty over the future of the school has resulted in 'a state of paralysis'. As a result, the school cannot make any progress in recruitment and the development of leadership capacity.

The headteacher has begun to tackle weak leadership. She has commissioned reviews of safeguarding and behaviour. As a result procedures, including those relating to staff recruitment, have been tightened.

### **External support**

A recent school review, commissioned by the IEB, to assess progress since the Ofsted inspection in April 2016 concluded that the uncertainty surrounding the school's immediate future has constrained the attempts to strengthen provision. Until the school's future is clear, essential and urgent external support is not being implemented. The trust currently providing support for the school has provided significant training and support, for example to share best practice in monitoring attendance and punctuality, and this has strengthened the school's implementation of new procedures. As a result, steps to check daily absence are rigorously followed up by the attendance team and the police officer.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

Inspectors recognise that the school's improvement is dependent on urgent resolution of the school's status, so that new staff can be employed and leadership can be strengthened.

In order to improve pupils' behaviour, welfare and safety, leaders need to:

- raise the expectations of staff and pupils in regard to what constitutes acceptable behaviour
- establish a positive climate for learning and respect for all
- ensure that all pupils feel confident to discuss their concerns and report bullying.

I am copying this letter to the director of children's services for Norfolk, the Secretary of State for Education, the regional schools commissioner and the interim executive board. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**