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Mr Scott Ratheram
Headteacher
Cottingham High School and Sixth Form College
Harland Way
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Dear Mr Ratheram

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Cottingham High School and Sixth Form College

Following my visit to your school on 23 November 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 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

Cottingham High School and Sixth Form College is larger than the average-sized secondary school with 990 pupils on roll, including around 150 pupils in the sixth form. The number of pupils on roll is falling, having been just over 1,100 at the time of the last inspection in May 2015. An average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is also in line with the national average. Most pupils are of White British heritage and relatively few pupils speak English as an additional language. The school is fully staffed and hosts a number of trainee teachers each year.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare were judged to require improvement in the last inspection in May 2015. Leaders now judge this aspect of the school's work to be good and can cite a range of initiatives they have implemented to 'raise the bar' and ensure that everyone holds high expectations. Pupils themselves appreciate the changes that have been made. They say that lessons are no longer interrupted by poor behaviour and consequently they feel that they are making better progress. They particularly welcome the fact that good behaviour and active participation in lessons are now being consistently recognised and rewarded.

Teachers and senior staff ensure a prompt start to the day. Punctuality is good because they check arrivals at the main entrance and record any pupil who is late. Sanctions for lateness are well understood, meaning that almost all pupils endeavour to get into school on time. Tutorial time is used purposefully to discuss and debate topical issues. Tutors make frequent checks to ensure that pupils wear the correct uniform and bring the right equipment. Pupils are respectful and well behaved in assembly, where they warmly applaud pupils who have achieved 100% attendance.

Across the day, the school is typically calm and orderly. Lessons begin quickly and pupils immediately settle to their work. They are highly respectful of the teacher's authority and follow instructions readily. Relationships between members of staff and pupils are warm and friendly. Pupils are consistently respectful and keen to please. Most take pride in the presentation of their work and are increasingly willing to participate in discussions and debate. At social times, pupils mix happily with one another. They are well supervised by members of staff, including the headteacher and other senior leaders, in both indoor and outdoor areas. In the canteen, pupils tidy away without needing to be reminded and they ensure that the school site is free from litter. Pupils move quickly across the expansive school site between lessons so that very few arrive late.

Senior leaders gave careful consideration to the development of a new behaviour policy last year. The positive discipline policy, introduced in September 2016, is well

understood and welcomed because leaders ensured that members of staff, pupils and parents were widely consulted. Teachers apply the new policy consistently. Posters in every classroom set out clearly the rewards and sanctions that will be applied. In response to the training they have received, teachers now focus more on rewarding pupils' positive behaviours, such as answering challenging questions, completing good-quality homework or contributing well to group work. Pupils are also clearer about what types of behaviour are not acceptable and they know that firm sanctions will be applied. Universally, pupils told inspectors that they felt these sanctions were fair and that they appreciate 'knowing where we stand'.

There remain a small number of pupils who present more challenging behaviour. On a daily basis, the use of internal isolation acts as a meaningful deterrent. A few pupils who struggle to behave in mainstream lessons are taught a full curriculum in a separate provision on the school site. With the support of external specialists, they receive good help to moderate their behaviour and are integrated back into the main school as soon as appropriate. The school makes regular checks on the attendance and attitudes of the small number of pupils who attend alternative provision at local colleges on a part-time basis. These strategies have helped to reduce the number of exclusions from the school considerably over the last year.

The introduction of the positive discipline system has improved the general climate for learning. Some teachers have also improved the strategies they use to engage and motivate pupils, which is promoting more active participation and independence. However, this is not yet consistent across the school, as some lessons do not give pupils, especially the most able, enough opportunity to manage their own learning.

Pupils say that there is little bullying in the school and records show that incidents of bullying are relatively rare and declining. Leaders have tightened up their systems for recording incidents of bullying and now give more support to the few pupils who are adversely affected. The school's anti-bullying coordinator now meets with bullying victims and talks to parents more regularly to check whether the school's actions have addressed the problem. Heads of year also work with the perpetrators of bullying to ensure that they understand the negative impact of their actions. More recently, a helpful peer-mentoring programme has been introduced, with older pupils trained to support more vulnerable younger pupils. The school has increased the level of guidance it provides to pupils regarding the risks of bullying through digital media, as their analysis shows that this is most typically the source of bullying. Two focus weeks this term have raised awareness of the law on equalities and every individual's right to privacy online. Pupils also know that the school will treat all those that share bullying-based digital information equally firmly.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have worked hard to improve attendance. Overall attendance last year improved to be above the national average and there were fewer pupils regularly absent than seen nationally in secondary schools. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is no better than the national

average and too many continue to miss school regularly, which is contributing adversely to the progress they make.

Senior leaders and governors systematically monitor a broad range of indicators of pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare. Consequently, they are well informed and closely involved in decisions regarding individual pupils' welfare. They use the information they hold to plan improvements in provision thoughtfully. The school's plans for improvement include relevant objectives linked to the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection, which are carefully monitored to check that the actions being taken are having a positive impact. Leaders fulfil their statutory safeguarding duties rigorously and engender a culture of vigilance across the school. They model high standards of behaviour and manners in their everyday interactions and provide positive role models for pupils. Parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, are confident that the school makes sure that its pupils are well behaved and that staff deal effectively with bullying.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that more teaching actively builds pupils' self-confidence and self-assurance.
- Further improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and reduce the number who persistently miss school, so that the gap between their attendance and that of other pupils nationally is reduced.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector