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9 February 2017

Mrs Helen McEvoy  
Headteacher  
Graham School  
Woodlands Drive  
Scarborough  
North Yorkshire  
YO12 6QW

Dear Mrs McEvoy

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

Following my visit with John McNally, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 26 January 2017, 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 aspects of the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school (including governance) and the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils.

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements and met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, groups of teachers, the chair of the governing body and four representatives of the local authority.

Inspectors visited lessons, had discussions with pupils and looked at the work in their books and folders. Inspectors also reviewed a range of documents relating to pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare. Inspectors considered 33 responses recorded on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the lead inspector had a telephone conversation with one parent.

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

The school is not making progress in improving the effectiveness of the leadership and management of pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare.

## **Context**

Graham School is a larger than average-sized secondary school. There are currently 1,069 pupils on the school's roll. Almost all are from White British backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language. Approximately two fifths of pupils are supported through the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority). The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than the national average.

The school was inspected in November 2015 and its overall effectiveness was judged to require improvement. The effectiveness of leadership and management was judged to be good. Since this inspection, Ofsted has received three complaints which raised concerns about the leadership and management of pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare. This inspection focused on the wider issues arising from these complaints.

## **Inspection findings**

Many pupils behave well in lessons and throughout the school day. They work hard, are polite and respectful, and want to do well. Too often, however, pupils' learning is interrupted by poor or disruptive behaviour, especially at the lower school. This has a negative impact on the progress that pupils make.

Teachers do not always insist that pupils comply with the school's expectations, nor do they consistently follow the agreed system of rewards and sanctions. Crucially, senior leaders do not systematically check whether the school's approach to managing behaviour is understood by pupils and followed by staff. Senior leaders have been too slow to pick up the inconsistencies in teachers' practice and, as a result, have not provided the timely guidance, additional training and strong support some of their colleagues need.

In contrast, when teachers have clear and high expectations and the work they set is interesting and challenging, pupils respond positively and with great enthusiasm. In a Year 10 English lesson, for example, pupils confidently identified the language features in a text and their effect on the reader. Their attitudes to learning were positive and they responded enthusiastically to the teacher's skilful questioning. All listened attentively and worked cooperatively because the teacher's expectations were clear and the learning activity promoted good levels of engagement.

Many of the parents who gave their views expressed concerns about pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare. Inspectors agree that pupils' behaviour is not managed consistently well, especially at the lower school. Older pupils told inspectors that the behaviour is 'better' at the upper school and lessons are disrupted less frequently. Inspectors agree that this is the case. Also, older pupils said that incidents of bullying are dealt with well at the upper school,

whereas, too often, such incidents were not dealt with in an effective or timely enough way at the lower school. This was a concern highlighted by many parents.

Since September, levels of attendance have declined and the number of pupils who are persistently absent has increased. Few pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, have the good level of attendance needed to make fast progress and achieve well. For too many pupils, poor or irregular attendance continues to have a profound impact on the outcomes they achieve. Senior leaders have not done enough to make sure that good attendance is the norm at Graham School.

The school's safeguarding policy has been recently reviewed and updated and a comprehensive programme of staff training is in place. As a result, staff are knowledgeable about the things that make pupils vulnerable and alert to the signs that a pupil may need help or protection. However, some of the guidance given to staff is not sufficiently clear and, as a result, staff are unsure about how some concerns should be reported. All checks on the suitability of staff to work in the school are in place, but the record of these checks was incomplete at the start of the inspection.

While senior leaders have worked hard to tackle long-standing weaknesses in the school's effectiveness, their actions have not had enough impact on pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare. Senior leaders have spent too little time checking whether their actions, and the school's policies and procedures, are having the necessary impact.

### **External support**

The local authority has, rightly, sought assurance that the school has sufficiently robust procedures for handling complaints and responding to concerns raised by parents or a member of staff. Similarly, the local authority has recently reviewed the effectiveness of important aspects of the school's leadership and management.

The local authority has a realistic picture of the school's strengths and the areas needing further work. Their support has not, however, had enough impact on the leadership and management of pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare. Greater urgency and more committed and intensive action is now required.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should make sure that:

- all staff understand and consistently follow the school's procedures for reporting concerns
- all staff understand the school's behaviour policy and have the confidence, skills and effective support needed to implement it consistently and effectively
- the implementation and effectiveness of the school's policies relating to pupils'

personal development, behaviour and welfare are closely monitored and, where improvement is needed, swift and decisive action is taken

- urgent and effective action is taken to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence.

Yours sincerely

Nick Whittaker

**Her Majesty's Inspector**