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18 October 2017

Mr Philip Wheatley
Principal
Harris Academy Purley
Kendra Hall Road
South Croydon
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Dear Mr Wheatley

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Harris Academy Purley

Following my visit to your school on 27 September 2017 with Gerard Strong, Ofsted Inspector, 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 pupils' 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 maintain the high standards of behaviour and attitudes identified at the school's previous inspection.

Context

1,030 pupils attend this school, including 161 in the sixth form. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is about average for secondary schools in England, while the proportion of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds is well above average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is approximately double the national average. The school's population is stable, with relatively few pupils arriving or leaving mid-year. The principal has been in post since September 2017. He is the third principal in three years.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Leaders recognise that following the previous inspection in 2011, standards of behaviour dipped slightly due to a combination of weaker leadership and leaders' over-reliance on fixed-term exclusions for managing unacceptable behaviour. Consequently, the proportion of fixed-term exclusions rose between 2013 and 2015 to well above the national average, including for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Over the last couple of years, new leadership has improved the situation considerably. The school's ethos of promoting positive behaviours that support excellent learning permeates the school environment. Pupils value the system of rewards that have been in place for the past couple of years. They particularly appreciate the recognition that comes with positive behaviour points. Pupils told inspectors that they like the school and feel happy here. Staff, including trainee and newly qualified teachers, report that they enjoy working at the school and recognise the positive effect that recent changes have had.

During the last two years, greater emphasis has been placed on promoting pupils' positive attitudes, alongside managing poor behaviour. Pupils have responded well to this approach, leading to high rates of attendance and good punctuality to lessons. Inspectors observed pupils before and after school and throughout the school day. The vast majority of pupils demonstrate a keen desire to get to lessons promptly and, once arrived, settle down to work quickly. Teachers are skilled at ensuring that pupils start learning immediately by setting clear expectations and using effective routines. Vigilant staff are quick to spot the very few pupils who have a tendency to dawdle, and provide reminders in a pleasant, yet firm, manner.

Throughout the day, pupils were calm, orderly and polite to staff and one another. Pupils reported that this was typical of their experience. Games and other social interactions are, at times, enthusiastic, but not rough. Inspectors observed pupils mixing well with one another and there was no indication of segregation between groups of pupils. Pupils told inspectors that pupils get along with each other well the vast majority of the time, with very few instances of bullying. The school's logs of behaviour and bullying confirm pupils' views. Staff are vigilant and supervise

breaks, lunchtimes and lesson transitions effectively. Staff are skilled at spotting potential issues and manage pupils' behaviour well. Inspectors noted that pupils' uniforms almost entirely met the school's expectations at the start of the day. However, after break and lunchtime, some pupils' uniforms were untidy and a few staff did not challenge this as pupils walked past them.

Staff recognise and understand pupils' needs, particularly if pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, or if pupils are vulnerable or disadvantaged. Leaders and teachers have, at their fingertips, a wealth of useful information that they use effectively to inform their work. Pupils reported that strategies to support their mental health and well-being have been a big part in helping them to improve their behaviour, particularly when they have struggled in the past. For example, mentors from school and external agencies have been effective in helping pupils develop coping mechanisms and in setting targets to which those pupils then aspire.

Leaders have planned strategically to remove barriers to learning throughout the school day. For example, staggered breaks and lunchtimes have helped reduce congestion in the canteen and so improve pupils' daily interactions at the start of these social times. Pupils noted this change as being particularly important to their experience of school.

Leaders have introduced alternatives to exclusion, so that there are appropriate steps between a minor classroom or playground incident and fixed-term exclusion. They recognised that the historical rising trend in fixed-term exclusions was not simply a result of pupils' declining behaviour but a sign that the system no longer worked for the pupils who needed the most support. There has been one permanent exclusion in nine years because leaders treat this as a last resort.

A small number of pupils use appropriate and closely monitored alternative provision. Teachers receive effective training and are skilled at dealing with the few instances of low-level disruption that typically occur. Both they and pupils understand leaders' expectations. A system called 'roaming' and the seclusion room now provide staff and pupils with the opportunity to correct minor infractions before things escalate and hinder pupils' progress. Consequently, the number of fixed-term exclusions has dropped significantly and the use of the new 'intermediate' measures is coming down. Inspectors' visits to the seclusion room, however, identified that some of the time, pupils were not getting on with the work as productively as they should. Leaders recognise this and have plans in place to make the seclusion room more effective.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that all staff consistently challenge untidy uniform, particularly after breaktimes.
- Develop the use of the seclusion room so that pupils' time in there is

minimised and highly productive.

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

Yours sincerely

Matt Tiplin
Her Majesty's Inspector