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Mr Philip Grant
Principal
Fulwood Academy
Black Bull Lane
Fulwood
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Dear Mr Grant

No formal designation inspection of Fulwood Academy

Following my visit to your school on 13 June 2019, 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, which was judged to be ineffective at the previous inspection in February 2019.

Evidence

I considered a range of documents summarising the actions taken by school leaders and the multi-academy trust (MAT) in response to the previous inspection. The school was judged to be ineffective because of the extent of poor behaviour and concerns about bullying. During the day, I met with school leaders and directors of the MAT. I spoke to almost 100 pupils, 20 staff and a group of parents. I observed behaviour at the start and end of the day, during and between lessons and at break and lunchtime. I also scrutinised the single central record.

Having considered the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time leaders are taking effective action to address the areas for improvement related to safeguarding.

Context

Since February 2019, four members of the leadership team have left the school and two new members have been appointed, both with responsibility for inclusion and behaviour. There are 15 members of teaching staff leaving at the end of the summer term. Leaders have been able to recruit 15 subject specialist teachers to replace them in time for September. The multi-academy trust has changed its name to the Dunstone Education Trust. The governing body, which has full delegated powers, has also seen changes in its membership.

Inspection findings

Importantly, the pupils that I spoke to told me that they feel safe in school. This was not previously the case.

Inspectors who visited the school in February concluded that leaders had not created a culture in which pupils felt safe or were safe. Despite safeguarding policies, protocols and systems being fit for purpose, pupils, parents and carers reported many incidents of bullying that were not tackled effectively by staff. Alongside this, inspectors reported high levels of very poor behaviour throughout the school. The actions of leaders to date show that they have focused their efforts on improving these aspects of provision. Quite rightly, leaders have prioritised addressing the poor behaviour of pupils. Clear expectations and consequences with rewards and sanctions have been established. When these are followed, teachers can teach and pupils can learn. However, there remains inconsistency in the way teachers apply the policy and pupils follow it.

Nonetheless, on the day of my visit, despite torrential rain, the pupils behaved in an orderly fashion. They moved around the school calmly and quickly. All the pupils that I spoke to said that this is very different from how it was a few months back. The staff that I spoke to commented that there are far fewer pupils on the corridors and out of lessons than before.

The February inspection identified that far too many pupils showed a lack of respect for staff and each other, which was having a detrimental impact on their well-being as well as their ability to learn. Pupils and staff told me that there is work to be done before respectful relationships become the norm. There are some pupils who are still very disrespectful to staff, especially to non-teaching staff. This directly relates to the inconsistent approach to the implementation of the behaviour policy. The pupils know exactly which teachers do and do not apply the policy consistently and they find this unfair.

In February 2019, bullying was a significant concern in the school. Many pupils shared their worries about this with inspectors. These concerns were also shared by some parents and staff. Pupils had little confidence that staff knew how to deal with bullying effectively.

Leaders fully accepted the findings of the inspection and immediately acted. A more transparent system of recording bullying was established and an anti-bullying campaign was launched. Staff have undergone additional training and anti-bullying assemblies have been held. There have also been changes to the pastoral system and structure. Anti-bullying ambassadors have been appointed and the principal holds a regular 'open clinic' for parents.

I asked all the pupils that I spoke to whether they thought that bullying was an issue. They told me that it is not as common as it used to be and were increasingly confident that it would be challenged. They also told me that fighting was not as common.

The records of bullying incidents that I saw showed that they have been followed up appropriately. This includes records of next steps and whether the pupils felt confident that their concerns had been taken seriously. The school's own records show that incidents of bullying are decreasing.

External support

Since the inspection, a new school improvement partner has been appointed. The school has previously had limited contact with other schools but has recently joined a teaching school alliance. Likewise, new relationships are being forged with other schools to allow the sharing of good practice and for staff to learn from other colleagues. As these relationships are only just beginning, it is not possible to evaluate how well leaders and staff are benefiting from external support.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector