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28 November 2019

Ms Charlotte Whelan
Hackney New School
Kingsland Road
London
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Dear Ms Whelan

No formal designation inspection of Hackney New School

Following my visit to your school on 13–14 November 2019, with Alison Moore, 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 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
- discussing whole-school systems for managing behaviour and attendance
- procedures and systems for keeping pupils and staff safe and ensuring their well-being
- discussions with school leaders and staff
- discussions with the chair of the trust and a representative from the local authority.

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

Leaders and managers are taking effective action to improve behaviour and secure consistently positive attitudes to learning. Safeguarding arrangements are effective.

Context

Hackney New School is a small, undersubscribed secondary school, with pupils aged 11 to 16. The school joined the Community Schools Trust (CST) on 1 November 2019. The trust has two other secondary academies, overseen by the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust. Almost a quarter of pupils receive special educational needs (SEN) support, with a smaller proportion having an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school serves a community in an area of high deprivation.

The predecessor school, also called Hackney New School, was opened in 2013 as a free school. It was part of the Hackney New Schools Trust, with a primary school located across the road. In July 2018, a Section 8 inspection raised concerns around leadership, attendance and behaviour. In March 2019, Hackney council officers raised further concerns to the Hackney New School trustees and the regional schools commissioner (RSC). There was continuing turbulence in leadership, with five headteachers in two years. Significant numbers of staff and pupils were leaving the school. The EKO trust was brokered to support both the primary and secondary schools. As a primary school trust, EKO asked CST in July 2019 to work in partnership to bring about the necessary improvements. At the same time, Ofsted judged the school to be inadequate across all judgements and deemed safeguarding to be ineffective. An interim board was established, and CST agreed to take the school into the trust, deploying an experienced headteacher at the school. The school closed on 31 October 2019.

Behaviour and attitudes

In a short space of time, the new headteacher, trust CEO and senior leaders have created a calm place to learn. Pupils' behaviour is improving. Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Pupils and staff say that the school is now a different place. Leaders have put in place systems and structures to teach pupils how to behave respectfully. Pupils follow school routines at the start of the day and following break and lunchtimes. This enables lessons to begin in an orderly way. Pupils are reminded to walk quietly, be aware of others and to arrive punctually. High numbers of staff supervise throughout the day, across the site. Staff are persistent in reminding pupils of the correct way to conduct themselves. They model how best to show respect towards each other. Pupils take pride in their appearance and understand the school's dress code. Pupils say that they value the support and guidance they receive from the behaviour mentors.

The headteacher is beginning to establish a positive culture at the school. The 10 'Hackney Values' incorporate a vision for the school. The first four include 'being kind', 'having high expectations', 'working together on our community' and 'doing what's right'. New clubs, a school council and other student roles and responsibilities have been introduced. Each Year 11 pupil will soon get a pack of stationery from the headteacher, to help prepare for examinations. Pupils' achievements and good attendance are celebrated in assembly. Pupils are publicly rewarded with credits and badges. Reprimands are given in a respectful manner. Some pupils feel that

sanctions do not always reflect the misdemeanour. They believe that some sanctions are given too liberally. Leaders check that pupils are given the right support.

Attendance, while still below the national average, has improved. Leaders now know which pupils attend infrequently. They are working with families and external agencies to improve this.

Leaders are aware that bullying, particularly online and name-calling, is still an issue. They are continuing to train staff to identify and deal with incidents of bullying. Assemblies and tutor times are used to discuss the weekly 'big question'. This week's focused on 'Why do some people like to dominate others?'

Pupils' attitudes to learning in class are still highly variable. Low-level disruption is still too common across the school. Pupils call out, laugh out of turn, mess around and put their heads on the desk to sleep. Leaders have initiated a reminder, warning and removal system to deal with this, and staff are starting to use this systematically. The '3-2-1 Slant' is how staff get pupils' attention. Training for staff is ongoing. Staff say that they value this support. They welcome advice on how to deal with different behaviours.

The safeguarding team are experienced and know how to access early help for pupils and their families. They have introduced robust systems for recording referrals and checking that actions are carried out in a timely way. Staff training this term has been comprehensive. Staff can articulate their knowledge about different types of abuse and how to identify concerns. They understand some of the challenges potentially faced by pupils. These include radicalisation, domestic violence, gang affiliation, child sexual exploitation, mental health and anxiety. Staff know that they are responsible for making swift referrals and know how to do so.

Priorities for further improvement:

- Continue to implement and embed a fair and consistent behaviour system that develops a respectful community where staff and pupil relationships flourish.
- Ensure that teachers have the skills and confidence to nurture positive attitudes to learning in lessons.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Matthews
Her Majesty's Inspector