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Ms Thahmina Begum
Forest Gate Community School
Forest Lane
London
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Dear Ms Begum

No formal designation inspection of Forest Gate Community School

Following my visit with Ian Morris, Fiona Abankwah, Daniel Coyle and Sophie Welch, Ofsted Inspectors, to your school on 26-27 February 2020, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This 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 wished to determine the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school.

Evidence

We scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding arrangements. We met with school leaders and the chief executive officer of the Community Schools Trust. We met with members of staff individually and in groups, pupils, and the chairs of the local governing body and the trust board. We visited classrooms in a wide range of subjects and across all year groups, sometimes accompanied by school leaders. We considered fully all the correspondence received before the inspection. We held telephone conversations with parents and with the designated officer for Newham. We held informal conversations with staff and pupils during and between lessons. We observed pupils' behaviour during the school day. We attended two assemblies and observed tutor time, which is when the school delivers its personal, social, health and economic education programme.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

This school is larger than average, with 1,192 pupils on roll. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average. Although pupils represent a range of ethnic groups, close to one third are of Bangladeshi heritage. Far more pupils than the national average speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is slightly lower than the national average. The school has more boys than girls. The school has experienced some difficulty in recruiting to subjects like science and geography, but currently is fully staffed.

You have been headteacher at the school since the start of this academic year but a member of staff for much longer. Your predecessor is now the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust and works very closely with you. You are supported by a skilful leadership team and by effective chairs of the local governing body and trust board. Together you have set a clear strategic direction. This is based on a vision that is ambitious to ensure that all pupils receive a well-rounded, high-quality education.

Senior leaders have a strong presence around the school. We spoke to many members of staff. They all expressed admiration and respect for senior leaders' professionalism, expertise and empathy. Staff feel listened to and cared for. Their well-being is always considered when important decisions are made about working practices.

The school's motto, 'fly, grow, connect, strive', underpins all aspects of its work, not least the curriculum. Leaders have designed an ambitious programme that meets pupils' needs very well. Disadvantaged pupils are challenged to achieve ambitious goals. A sense of social justice prevails in wanting the best for every pupil. Most disadvantaged pupils study a wide range of academic subjects and achieve just as well as their peers. They are exposed to classic literature and texts from authentic sources. Pupils build up stamina for studying by focusing on these texts for sustained periods of time. This also challenges their thinking skills. Most pupils with SEND are skilfully supported to access the same resources. As a result, they too achieve well and move on to further education. By the end of Year 11, Forest Gate pupils achieve exceptionally high outcomes throughout the curriculum, particularly in the English baccalaureate subjects.

Leaders plan the curriculum thoughtfully and make sure that key themes and concepts are covered well in Years 7 and 8. GCSE courses start in Year 9. Opportunities are provided for pupils in Years 9 and 10 to continue studying

subjects such as art, music and drama if they have not opted for these subjects at GCSE.

Leaders promote a 'knowledge-led' curriculum. Teachers build pupils' subject knowledge in a systematic way from Year 7 to Year 11. They use effective strategies to help pupils remember new knowledge and use it to solve problems. The school's 'dynamic progress reporting' system assesses pupils' learning and provides them with feedback about the topic they are learning. Leaders are continuing to focus on developing a range of strategies that help students retain knowledge to enable them to secure even higher outcomes.

Leaders provide pupils with rich and diverse extra-curricular opportunities. These range from outdoor adventure pursuits to lively debates about current issues. This has a strong impact on pupils' personal development, particularly their character development and resilience. The variety of after-school clubs and activities is extensive. The opportunities provided for pupils are of high quality, including sporting, musical, artistic and academic. Pupils really value this offer. Uptake and participation is high.

Staff receive regular professional development. Senior leaders are developing the capacity of middle leaders to coach and mentor new and less experienced staff. Staff are clear about leaders' high expectations of pupils' conduct. This helps to ensure a consistent response to managing behaviour. Pupils and staff know what is expected of them. Pupils conduct themselves calmly and sensibly around the school and in lessons. They said that behaviour as we saw it during the inspection is typical.

The school does not tolerate bullying. Serious incidents of poor behaviour, including bullying, are rare. Pupils told us that verbal bullying does happen very occasionally, but staff deal with it effectively and quickly. Incidents involving aggression or inappropriate language are dealt with swiftly.

Pupils are punctual to school and to lessons. Attendance rates are high for all pupils. Fixed-term and internal exclusions are used appropriately. Leaders, including governors, scrutinise carefully the reason for pupils leaving the school. They are inclusive and focus strongly on supporting all pupils to achieve their best. There is no evidence that off-rolling is the basis for any pupil leaving the school.

Leaders make sure all members of staff are vigilant and know what to do if they have a concern. Pupils said that they are confident to talk to staff if they are worried or unhappy. Leaders consult parents and, when necessary, refer concerns to social care or the police. Records show that leaders pursue cases doggedly until they resolve them. Staff work well with a wide range of agencies to give vulnerable pupils excellent help and support. The curriculum includes lessons about safety, including about online risks or threats such as gangs and county lines.

School leaders and governors have carefully considered how staff manage their workload. All members of staff who spoke to us were unanimous in expressing how they feel very well supported by senior leaders.

Governors and trustees play a very important part in driving the school forward. They are well informed and hold all leaders to account, including the headteacher and chief executive officer. They visit the school, talk to pupils and survey staff. They use information and analysis about pupils' performance to inform strategy and plans for the school.

External support

Leaders liaise efficiently and regularly with a range of outside agencies, including the local authority, to ensure that safeguarding policy and practice in the school are effective. They also collaborate with other schools outside the trust to learn from strong practice elsewhere.

Priorities for further improvement

- Continue to strengthen the links between different topics and concepts taught across the curriculum in order to deepen pupils' understanding.
- Continue to develop middle leaders' coaching and mentoring skills with their less experienced colleagues.

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 Newham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Nasim Butt

Her Majesty's Inspector