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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
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4 May 2021

Kim Isaksen
Acting Headteacher
Huxlow Science College
Finedon Road
Irthlingborough
Wellingborough
Northamptonshire
NN9 5TY

Dear Mrs Isaksen

No formal designation inspection of Huxlow Science College

Following my inspection with Deborah Mosley, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 18 March 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the findings.

This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for no formal designation (NFD) inspections. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills wished to determine the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, and was concerned about pupils' well-being and behaviour at the school, as concerns had been raised with Ofsted.

We do not give graded judgements on these inspections. Under normal circumstances, if we find some evidence that overall standards may be declining, but no serious concerns have been identified, then the next inspection of the school is likely to be a section 5 inspection and be brought forward. If we identify significant concerns, normally we will deem the inspection as being completed under section 5 of the Act.

During the inspection of your school, concerns were identified. These related to the behaviour of pupils. However, due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic and the suspension of routine inspections, we have not treated this inspection as a section 5 inspection. The school's next inspection will be a section 5 inspection.

Having considered all the evidence, and taking into account the impact of COVID-19 on the school, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and those responsible for governance are not taking effective action to maintain the high standards of behaviour and attitudes identified at the school's previous inspection.

Safeguarding is effective.

Priorities for further improvement

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should urgently address weaknesses in pupils' behaviour by ensuring that:
 - all staff have consistently high expectations of pupils' behaviour
 - all staff consistently apply the school's behaviour policy to eradicate instances of low-level disruption and disrespectful behaviour
 - relationships between pupils and with staff are consistently positive and respectful
 - pupils arrive at school and at their lessons on time
 - leaders evaluate the strategies they have recently introduced to improve pupils' behaviour, to check that these strategies are working.

Context

- Huxlow Science College is a smaller-than-average secondary school with 929 pupils aged 11 to 18. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below that seen nationally. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Levels of pupil mobility are higher in this school than seen nationally.
- The acting headteacher has been in post since the start of January 2021. This arrangement will continue for the rest of the school year. A new headteacher has been appointed and will join the school in September 2021.
- At the time of the inspection, the vast majority of pupils were attending on site.

Main findings

- Leaders and governors have ensured that the school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school.

Staff are appropriately trained. They are knowledgeable about safeguarding responsibilities and are kept well informed. They know how to identify and report concerns. Leaders ensure that the school's systems for safeguarding pupils are fit for purpose. Detailed record-keeping shows that staff follow the school's reporting procedures well. Leaders work closely with external agencies, including the local police, to keep vulnerable pupils safe. Leaders act swiftly to protect pupils, including when concerns arise about the conduct of adults.

- Leaders have planned a comprehensive curriculum for pupils' personal development. Pupils receive daily 'LORIC' sessions (leadership, organisation, resilience, initiative and communication). These sessions started in September 2020. Leaders have planned to cover important themes, including mental health and well-being, having regard for those who have protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010, and guidance about future careers. These plans are designed to be flexible, so that leaders respond to and provide up-to-date support and information about current issues. Leaders are passionate about developing this aspect of pupils' learning.
- It is too soon to see the impact of this work on pupils' behaviours and attitudes. Pupils who spoke with inspectors struggled to recall what they had learned during their LORIC sessions. They could not talk confidently about healthy relationships or how they can keep themselves safe. Pupils' attitudes towards LORIC time are often indifferent. They said that the quality of these sessions depends on which tutor they have. Staff have not checked to ensure that pupils' understanding of the LORIC curriculum is secure. As one pupil put it: 'It is just form time, stuff gets checked and then we move on.'
- Most pupils are polite and courteous. They say that bullying is not an issue in school. They are confident that staff would deal with any instances of bullying effectively. Relationships between staff and pupils are typically friendly.
- Inspectors observed several instances of pupils disrupting learning by excessive talking or other distractions. On some occasions, inspectors saw pupils displaying disrespectful behaviour towards members of staff. This behaviour often went unchallenged. Staff do not consistently apply the school's policy for managing behaviour. Leaders' records show that high numbers of pupils are removed from lessons because of poor behaviour.
- Leaders' safety measures for COVID-19 have reduced the amount of social space available to pupils. However, during social time, inspectors saw and heard several instances of loud and boisterous behaviour. In some cases, the behaviour of pupils was aggressive. Inspectors also heard examples of pupils using derogatory language. Staff do not consistently challenge these behaviours. When they do, pupils sometimes ignore staff's requests to moderate their behaviour. Pupils told inspectors that behaviour is variable,

particularly out of lessons. They said that a small number of pupils have a disruptive influence.

- Pupils are not consistently punctual either to lessons or when arriving at school in the morning. Pupils told inspectors that staff do not consistently challenge them about poor punctuality.
- Governors are committed to the school. They are knowledgeable about safeguarding. Governors review the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding regularly. Their checks include the measures that leaders have put in place to safeguard children during the pandemic. However, governors do not recognise the weaknesses in standards of behaviour at the school.
- Leaders have recently introduced new policies to manage pupils' behaviour. These measures include an initiative to achieve 'disruption-free learning' and an 'ask, tell, remove' system. Leaders have also introduced new procedures for checking pupils' behaviour. Staff provide extra support for pupils who need help to manage their own behaviour. Leaders are looking at how they can ensure more support for specific areas of the school, or 'hot spots', where behaviour issues are more frequent.
- The impact of the pandemic has slowed the progress leaders would like to have made with these initiatives. Leaders say that their policies are beginning to improve standards of behaviour. New approaches to praising and rewarding pupils have been well received. However, inspectors found that the views of leaders, governors and staff about pupils' behaviour are overly positive. Leaders have not yet evaluated the impact of the recently introduced strategies to improve pupils' behaviour.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted on site due to concerns about safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.

We met with a number of the school's leaders, including the designated safeguarding lead. We met with two groups of staff and spoke to staff and pupils around the school site. We observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during social time and spoke with several groups of pupils. I met with two members of the governing body, including the chair.

We scrutinised the single central register and the school's procedures for ensuring the suitability of staff to work with children. We explored a range of other documents relating to behaviour, safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We evaluated the effectiveness of the curriculum for pupils' personal development in helping them to understand how to keep themselves safe.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Stevens
Her Majesty's Inspector