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Michael Astley
Principal
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Dear Mr Astley

Urgent inspection of St Peter's CofE Academy

Following our visit to the school on 6 December 2023, I write on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave us and the time you and your team took to discuss behaviour in the school.

The inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for urgent inspections. The inspection was carried out because His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills was concerned about behaviour at the school.

We do not give graded judgements on urgent inspections. However, if we find some evidence that overall standards may be declining, but where no serious concerns have been identified, then the next inspection will normally be a graded inspection, which will be carried out under section 5 of the Act and will be brought forward. If we have serious concerns, we will deem the urgent inspection as a graded inspection immediately.

Evidence

We considered evidence that included:

- observations of pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning in lessons
- observations of pupils' behaviour throughout the day, including discussions with pupils
- documentary evidence relating to behaviour and safeguarding
- discussions with leaders, including the chief executive officer (CEO), and staff.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance have taken effective action to improve behaviour and secure more consistent positive attitudes to learning.

Behaviour and attitudes

Since the previous inspection, you and your leaders have taken positive steps to improve the behaviour of pupils at the academy. You recognised that the culture of behaviour at the school needed to be addressed and have set about making sensible changes to improve it. In several areas, you are already seeing the positive impact of this work.

Your new, simplified behaviour policy has led to a calmer and more orderly school. The school's six key learning habits have been shared with staff, pupils and parents so that everyone is clear about your expectations. Leaders re-visit these expectations through half-termly assemblies so that pupils and staff are reminded of the high standards you have set. Your leaders have also ensured that each day gets off to a smooth start. Every morning, pupils are expected to line up in their year group so that heads of year can share key messages with them before they move swiftly into their form time registration. During this inspection, it was clear to see this working well.

You and your leaders have worked closely with staff to ensure that the behaviour policy is implemented effectively. For example, there are 'scripts' for staff to follow so that there is consistency in the language used by staff to meet and greet pupils at the start of lessons. You have also introduced weekly training with staff around behaviour to model how to deal with incidents and share good practice. These training sessions are devised in response to what is currently happening in school so that emerging issues can be addressed quickly. However, you recognise there is still more work to do to improve behaviour further. There have been no permanent exclusions this academic year. However, the number of permanent exclusions for the previous academic year was significantly above the national average and the number of pupils who are suspended from school continues to be high. This, in part, is because some pupils are suspended from school when they miss a 'correction'. While there are some early signs that the number of 'corrections' for younger year groups is reducing, there is still work to do to review the behaviour policy and reduce the high number of pupils who are suspended from school.

During this inspection, pupils' behaviour and attitudes were generally positive. The majority of pupils moved sensibly between lessons and responded well to staff instructions. In lessons, pupils were usually focused and behaved sensibly. However, on occasion, some pupils disrupted the learning of others, and this was not always dealt with consistently well by teachers.

Almost all pupils told inspectors that behaviour has improved over the last 12 months. They confirmed that the new behaviour policy had made a positive difference to the school. Pupils said they felt safe in school and knew who to go to if something was worrying them. Pupils had confidence in staff to deal with issues and appreciated the

support they received with their learning. That said, some pupils did express concern about how perceived 'minor indiscretions' could lead to a suspension. Some pupils also wanted to have more of 'a voice' in how the behaviour policy was implemented moving forward.

You and your leaders are aware that there is more work to do to improve attendance. You track and monitor attendance data closely, including for disadvantaged pupils. Your leaders attend regular network meetings locally to share best practice as well as engaging external agencies, such as Barnardo's, to support your work in this area. You have clear systems in place to follow up on pupil absence and have started to put in place interventions for those with poor attendance. However, at present, it is too early to see the impact of this work. As a consequence, overall attendance is below where it was last year and persistent absence remains high.

Additional support

Your leaders have welcomed the support they have received from the Department for Education's behaviour and attendance hubs. You and your team have visited other schools to help develop and revise your behaviour and attendance policies. In addition to this, you have also been visited by other local schools to share the work you have been doing in this area.

Priorities for further improvement

- The school should now review its behaviour policy and its implementation to ensure the number of pupils who are suspended reduces.
- The school should continue to work closely with pupils and their families to put in place the necessary support to help improve attendance.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the CEO or equivalent of the Woodard Academies trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Lichfield, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Stoke-on-Trent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Howes
His Majesty's Inspector