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Jon Taylor
Wath Comprehensive School: A Language College
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Dear Mr Taylor

No formal designation inspection of Wath Comprehensive School: A Language College

Following my visit with Steven Shaw and Dimitris Spiliotis, Her Majesty's Inspectors, and Mary Lanovy-Taylor, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 9 March 2018, 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 unannounced 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 arrangements and the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils at the school.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. Inspectors met with you, the chief executive officer of the school's new trust, and a range of colleagues who have responsibility for safeguarding and the development of pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare. An inspector met with the chair of the governing body and spoke to the governor with specific oversight of safeguarding. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour as they arrived at school and during break and lunchtime. Inspectors spoke to two groups of staff and two groups of pupils, one from key stage 3 and one from key stage 4. Inspectors also spoke to pupils informally, including sixth-form students. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons. Inspectors considered the school's information relating to pupils' behaviour

and attendance, including incidents of exclusion. They also looked at the support that you and other school leaders organise and provide for pupils whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. Inspectors looked at a range of other evidence, including procedures and policies linked to complaints and allegation management.

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

The school is taking effective action to improve the effectiveness of pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare.

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

Wath Comprehensive School is significantly larger than other secondary schools. There are currently 1769 pupils on roll. Wath Comprehensive School is in the process of becoming part of the Maltby Learning Trust; this is due to be completed in May 2018.

The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average, as is the proportion that speaks English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium funding is in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is average. The school continues to be oversubscribed.

The school is in the process of appointing an assistant headteacher with responsibility for behaviour and pastoral care. Since the previous inspection, an additional behaviour support worker has been appointed to work with other pastoral leaders, including the behaviour support manager.

The school was inspected in March 2017 and was judged to require special measures. The school's arrangements for safeguarding were judged to be effective. Since the inspection, Ofsted has received concerns about pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, and issues of a safeguarding nature. This inspection focused on the wider issues arising from these concerns.

Inspection findings

Since the previous inspection, you and other school leaders have been effective in improving the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils. There have been some complaints of bullying and complaints of a lack of timely response to any complaints or allegations. Inspectors found that the systems and procedures that you use to investigate any issues or complaints are robust and followed systematically. They help to keep pupils safe.

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, reported that behaviour in classrooms has improved. They also said that more members of staff are visible on corridors during the change of lessons, and that this, together with additional one-way systems in corridors and stairwells, has created a calmer atmosphere. Inspection evidence confirms this. However, there is a lack of consistency in the way members of staff implement behaviour policies. As a result, although improving, some low-level disruption is still present in lessons. Sometimes, teachers are interrupted by pupils, or they need to spend too long dealing with silly behaviour in class. Not all pupils wear their uniform with pride, and a minority need reminding to behave sensibly when moving from one classroom to another.

You and your leaders track incidents of misbehaviour with increasing precision and respond accordingly. For example, you have used tracking information to review the 'consequences' system and have made changes to make it more effective. You noticed the relatively large number of pupils being removed from class and spending time in the 'consequences room'. You arranged for additional support to be given to these pupils by pastoral staff. This has led to a decrease in the number of referrals to the 'consequences room', and has, therefore, increased learning time for these pupils. This is one example of how you look at behaviour information and improve systems so that fewer pupils disrupt learning. This reflective cycle of improvement is typical of your work and that of other leaders.

Your work to improve behaviour has included the use of fixed-term exclusion as a sanction. These exclusions have increased in number since September, but now, as a result of improved systems at school, the number of pupils missing learning time because of being excluded, is starting to decrease. You are aware that the number of fixed-term exclusions still remains too high and plan to reduce it further.

Pupils said that they have confidence in adults at school to help if ever a pupil were being bullied. They told inspectors that bullying is not common. Inspectors noted the wide variety of roles in school to support pupils if there is a problem. For example, each year group has an academic year leader and a pastoral year leader. Key stage leaders oversee the work of these colleagues. Behaviour support colleagues are available to pupils. There is a colleague responsible for developing support for pupils who have social, emotional or mental health issues. Outside agencies and peer support groups support pupils at lunchtimes, and there is a space for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender pupils and their friends. This wide range of support helps ensure that pupils feel safe and have someone to talk to if they need.

Inspectors viewed school records and local authority reports to check how well you and members of the governing body respond to complaints about bullying and other issues of pupil welfare. You investigate any issues and respond to complaints in a timely manner. You seek to resolve situations for the good of the pupils in your care.

The team responsible for safeguarding ensures that pupils who are at risk receive timely support. Your staff work well with outside agencies to put plans in place to help these pupils. Staff are increasingly tenacious in their approach. As a result, any pupils with a child protection plan or who are potentially at risk are safer. You have ensured that safeguarding has a high priority at the school. Teachers and support staff understand safeguarding policies and know what to do if a pupil makes a disclosure or if they are worried about a pupil's well-being. They know how to whistle blow if ever there is a need. Both you and the chair of governors understand when to escalate any issues to the local authority designated officer and understand that you should follow their advice immediately. Records viewed by inspectors validate this understanding.

School pupil absence procedures are fit for purpose. Leaders and pastoral staff use a variety of systems to contact parents and carers if a pupil is not in school, or to support pupils who are absent too often. The school building is secure. When pupils are outside of the building at break or lunchtime, members of staff are present at the gates to check the reasons for any pupil leaving. You have ensured that similar processes are in place for students in the sixth form. You agree with inspectors that rates of attendance for disadvantaged pupils are too low, and too many of them are persistently absent. This is also the case for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Inspectors explained to you the need to register with a greater level of precision pupils who arrive at school late.

Since the previous inspection, the governing body has set up a school improvement group, and is increasingly effective at challenging you and other school leaders. You and your team have presented useful information to governors about rates of absence, behaviour records and any incidents of bullying. Governors have strategic oversight of safeguarding. As a result of your work and that of governors and leaders, rates of absence have seen steady improvement, and low-level disruption is less common. Supervision of pupils as they move around the site is more effective. Pupils are increasingly punctual to school. You are successfully tackling the areas for improvement cited in the previous inspection report.

You know that you need to continue to improve the behaviour of the minority of pupils who repeatedly do not follow school rules. You understand the need to decrease the number of fixed-term exclusions further, so that this does not have a negative impact on learning opportunities for these pupils. Teachers do not apply behaviour policies consistently, and not all pupils conform to your expectations of them. Nonetheless, you and other leaders are taking effective action to improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare. You know that there is still work to do, but inspection evidence confirms that improvements are under way and progress is being made.

External support

After the inspection in March 2017, the school received support from a national leader of education and a national leader of governance. More recently, colleagues from the Maltby Learning Trust have been working with you, other senior leaders and members of the governing body as part of the preparation and due diligence required before the school becomes part of the trust. This process has been effective in identifying where additional support is needed.

Priorities for further improvement

Leaders and those responsible for governance should make sure that:

- the number of pupils receiving fixed-term exclusions continues to fall
- the work that has been started with pupils who repeatedly break school rules continues, that it is monitored, and that it has an increasingly positive impact on their behaviour
- all staff are consistent in their application of behaviour policies so that pupils' conduct, both in lessons and as they move around school, is always of a high standard
- disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities attend school more regularly
- attendance and punctuality are recorded with greater precision.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Wardle

Her Majesty's Inspector