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Serena Madhvani
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Dear Ms Madhvani

Urgent inspection of Hornchurch High School

Following my visit to your school on 3 May 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 me and the time you took to discuss behaviour in your 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
- discussions with leaders and staff, and those responsible for governance.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance have taken effective action to maintain the high standards of behaviour and attitudes identified at the school's previous inspection.

Behaviour and attitudes

The trust has recently appointed a new executive headteacher, headteacher and other senior leaders. These leaders have very high expectations of pupils' conduct, attitudes to learning and attendance. In the short time that leaders have been in the school, they have successfully established these high expectations with pupils, staff and parents and carers. Leaders reviewed policies and systems that were used to manage behaviour previously. They swiftly identified key areas of concern and acted to rectify them. As a result, pupils behave well.

Leaders have made changes to the behaviour policy that are clear and easy for pupils and staff to understand. In the majority of cases, pupils' behaviour is calm and orderly in classrooms. Pupils are engaged in their learning. They respond positively to teachers' instructions, and they listen to one another with respect. As a result, pupils typically learn in their lessons with very little disruption. However, some inconsistencies remain across the school. Pupils said that disruption in lessons may sometimes happen and that this depends on the class they are in. Some pupils said that they find the new approach to behaviour overly strict. However, most said that it is clear that the new approach has led to less disruption, and this enables them to learn better. The new leadership team is aware of where things can be improved further. They are doing the right things to eliminate inconsistent approaches and ensure that all pupils are on board with the changes that have been made.

Pupils move around the building calmly during lesson changeovers and during breaktimes. There is an orderly start to the day when pupils line up before going to their form classes or assembly. Pupils conduct themselves well when entering the assembly hall and listen carefully and respectfully to those speaking. There are clear routines in place for pupils to follow at breaktimes. Pupils queue patiently for food and eat and talk to their friends in the canteen. Other pupils make good use of the outside space to talk and play games with their friends. Staff supervise all these areas appropriately and talk with pupils while they socialise and eat lunch with their peers. There are positive, professional relationships between pupils and staff.

Leaders have made attendance and punctuality a priority. They have increased the number of staff working in the attendance team. These staff intervene swiftly if pupils are absent. As a result, attendance has improved significantly in a short period of time. Leaders meet with heads of year weekly, and all pastoral leaders meet fortnightly. In these meetings, leaders and heads of year discuss pupils' attendance, punctuality and behaviour. They analyse data to identify potential patterns of behaviour and then support

pupils effectively, for example through mentoring or counselling. Leaders are alert to potential links between attendance and safeguarding concerns.

Leaders keep detailed records of bullying incidents. Pupils understand that bullying is not tolerated in this school. If it happens, pupils know how to report it. Pupils said that bullying was not a problem. They also trust their teachers to deal with any use of derogatory language, such as sexist, racist or homophobic comments. Nevertheless, some pupils said that they might be reluctant to report concerns of this kind because they did not want to be seen as 'telling' on their peers. Leaders are aware of this and have plans in place to address these issues.

The curriculum teaches pupils to be respectful of all, regardless of their backgrounds and views. This is taught in well-being lessons and during form time. However, some pupils feel that they would like to explore this content in more depth, particularly in relation to race and sexuality. To address this, leaders are in the process of developing a new curriculum for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education for September 2023.

Leaders work well with external agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Pupils said that they are safe in all parts of the school. They know who to speak to if they have concerns. Staff receive up-to-date safeguarding training and know how to report any concerns they may have.

Additional support

The multi-academy trust has taken a number of effective steps to strengthen leadership, including appointing new leaders and introducing the new leadership structure. The executive headteacher is the headteacher in another of the trust schools, and other new leaders have joined from trust schools. These leaders bring with them their expertise in and experience of behaviour management, curriculum thinking and implementation.

The trust and new leadership team share the same high expectations, and they are working together effectively to make sure these are securely embedded in all aspects of all life.

Priorities for further improvement

- Leaders have high expectations for behaviour in the school and have implemented new systems to manage pupils' behaviour. However, in a few cases, these are not consistently applied by staff. Some pupils perceive the new rules and routines to be too strict and are not fully on board with the changes. As a result, there are some areas where behaviour does not meet leaders' expectations and some pupils are reluctant to follow the new rules. Leaders should continue their work with staff and pupils to

achieve consistency and a shared understanding of the purpose and value of the new approach to behaviour.

- Even though pupils are confident that leaders and staff will deal with concerns appropriately, some remain reluctant to report bullying or use of derogatory language. Leaders should ensure that these concerns are considered while developing their new PSHE curriculum for September 2023 so that pupils feel fully confident to report their concerns.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of Partnership Learning multi-academy trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Havering. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Smith
His Majesty's Inspector