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Mr A Bird
Executive Headteacher
Fairfax
Fairfax Road
Sutton Coldfield
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7 October 2014

Dear Mr Bird

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Fairfax

Following my visit with Deana Holdaway, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 7 October 2014, 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 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 the Chief Inspector was concerned about the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, and the management of behaviour, particularly relating to students who are disabled and who have special educational needs.

Evidence

During the inspection my colleague and I scrutinised a range of documents including the single central record, other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements and the academy's records of behaviour and attendance, including exclusions. We visited lessons and observed break time and lunchtime. We spoke informally to students and staff, and met with the executive headteacher, the acting headteacher, members of the senior leadership team and the Chair and a member of the Governing Body.

We focused particularly on evaluating:

- whether safeguarding procedures meet requirements
- how well reasonable adjustments are made to manage the behaviour of disabled students and those with special educational needs
- how well the academy responds to behaviour-related incidents and helps students to improve their behaviour

- whether there is thorough recording and follow up to any incidents that occur, and clear and appropriate communication with parents
- the effectiveness of processes to reintegrate students after exclusions and prevent them from being excluded again
- how well absence is monitored, and the effectiveness of procedures to promote good attendance for all groups
- how effectively the academy prevents and tackles bullying, particularly for disabled students and those who have special educational needs
- whether supervision is appropriate to keep all groups of students safe during the academy day.

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

The academy's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

Context

The predecessor school converted to an academy in July 2011 and Fairfax has not been previously inspected. The academy is larger than the average secondary school. The percentages of students known to be eligible for free school meals, from minority ethnic groups and speaking English as an additional language are all below average. The proportion of students who are disabled or who have special educational needs is below average. A number of physically disabled students attend the academy and their specialist provision is partially resourced by Birmingham Local Authority.

The academy is about to enter into a multi-academy trust with another Birmingham secondary school. You will be the executive headteacher of both academies. An existing senior leader has become the acting headteacher of Fairfax.

Inspection findings

Fairfax is an inclusive academy which successfully combines a clear focus on high attainment and good achievement with an impressive level of care. Serious attention is paid to keeping students safe and ensuring that they develop personally and socially. The academy has very clear expectations for how all members of the community will behave towards each other, and these expectations are consistently met by both students and staff. The concept of shared responsibility is encapsulated by the phrase 'all of us, all of the time'. We saw this philosophy in action a number of times during the inspection.

Students' behaviour during a wet breaktime was impeccable. Hundreds of students sat together in the hall, chatting calmly and pleasantly. They were very well supervised by staff, who were vigilant but relaxed, talking to students about various

aspects of school life while checking that everyone was safe. The same picture was seen outside and in the refectory. Students socialised well throughout and there were no examples of students isolating others.

At lunchtime students mixed well, queued sensibly and showed good manners, including to lunchtime supervisors. One lunchtime supervisor described students as 'polite – there's no cheek'. At all times, disabled students integrated well with their peers. Students generally have a good awareness of the needs of disabled students in corridors and outside at break times. The physical environment in the academy is well thought out to promote inclusion and independence.

The students who spoke to inspectors confirmed unanimously that the behaviour we observed at break and lunchtime is the norm, as is the high presence of senior leaders. Students believe that behaviour at the academy is good, that they are safe and that there are some sensible rules. They understand the need for the new rule 'zero tolerance of play fighting' so that inappropriate behaviour does not escalate. Students said that bullying is minimal and gave concrete examples of where they could go to seek help. All felt that 'student support' would be their first port of call but also had other alternatives, such as their head of year, from whom they could confidently seek help.

Behaviour in lessons is very positive. In all the lessons visited students were very well focused on learning. Where necessary they worked in silence and with good levels of concentration. They cooperated well with each other, and at times actively supported each other with their learning. For example, in a lively drama lesson, some students encouraged and supported their more reserved peers so that they were able to perform. Teachers provided clear, well informed explanations of what they wanted students to achieve, which meant that students listened attentively and could quickly get on with their work. There was virtually no disruption to learning and minor transgressions were effectively managed with a gentle firmness and good humour. Younger, less-able students were assisted by the staff's clear modelling of behaviour and learning. For example, one teacher insisted that all students answered her questions out loud and in full sentences, and praised them for doing so. This technique clearly built their confidence and skills. Other teachers used effective techniques to build students' resilience and perseverance. Students said that behaviour in lessons is almost always good and that 'people want to learn'. They reflected that it may occasionally 'slip' with supply staff.

Students' movement between lessons was generally sensible. Students moved to their next lesson briskly, encouraged by staff in the corridors and quadrangles. Two exceptions were observed where bigger boys pushed into smaller students. The new one-way system in one part of the building is helpful to avoid the stairs becoming too crowded.

You and your senior leadership team have a thorough knowledge of the needs of all your students, including those who are disabled and who have special educational

needs. The academy has a wide range of strategies to help those students who need support to manage their behaviour, including calming spaces and self-referral cards. Many reasonable adjustments are made for disabled students and strategies are both imaginative and individualised. Staff are suitably trained in how to manage behaviour. There is thorough induction and information for new staff and supply staff. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour are carefully logged and analysed.

A broadly average number of students were excluded for a fixed period last academic year. However around three quarters of these students were excluded only once. A small number of students with special educational needs were excluded for fixed periods, some more than once; however the academy has a range of strategies to support students and to prevent this from happening whenever possible. In the light of a concern that arose in the early part of last academic year the academy has reviewed and further tightened its procedures for exclusions. The acting headteacher carefully checks that correct exclusions procedures are followed, and was able to demonstrate this through the documentation that we examined during the inspection. The academy has good procedures for reintegrating students following a fixed-term exclusion, and parents and carers are always involved.

Attendance is high. The academy has thorough procedures for following up on any absence and strongly challenges low attendance. The attendance of disabled students, students with special educational needs, and those eligible for the pupil premium receives particular attention. There is a good understanding of the links between safeguarding and attendance.

Safeguarding procedures are thorough. The single central record is detailed and meets all requirements. There is a suitable range of checks for visitors to the academy, including supply staff and contractors, all of whom must produce appropriate photographic identification to be allowed access to the academy. Staff receive frequent, up-to-date, safeguarding training. Examples of topics covered over the last academic year include bullying, female genital mutilation, e-safety, self-injury, homophobic bullying, child sexual exploitation and domestic violence. For students, aspects of safeguarding run through different events such as anti-bullying week, focus days and assemblies and themes are followed up in tutor time. Different topics such as cyberbullying, e-safety, drugs and alcohol misuse are covered in weekly personal, social and health education lessons.

Governors have a good understanding of the way in which the academy keeps students safe and manages behaviour. They are closely involved in exclusions and reintegration as appropriate. They ask you and other leaders pertinent questions about behaviour, safety and attendance.

External support

The academy has good working relationships with Birmingham Local Authority's behaviour support team and exclusions team. During the inspection we saw good examples of the way in which these partnerships have been used to enable students

to remain at the academy or find them appropriate support to meet their needs. You also purchase training courses run by these teams for your staff, which have been well received. You have commissioned support from Solihull Local Authority's education welfare team and have built effective partnerships with them that have had a good impact on some students' attendance.

Priorities for further improvement

- Review policies about safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and special educational needs to ensure that they are cross referenced as appropriate and reflect the strong practice within the academy.
- Continue to develop alternatives to exclusion.
- Further analyse the attendance of students who are disabled and who have special educational needs, extrapolating the attendance of students with medical needs from the attendance of those without to see if any patterns or issues emerge.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham, the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Morris-King
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc Mr A. Keane, Chair of the Governing Body