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31 October 2018

Mr Alan Blount
Headteacher
Newstead Wood School
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Dear Mr Blount

No formal designation inspection of Newstead Wood School

Following my visit with Helen Matthews and Stephen Adamson, Her Majesty's Inspectors, and Sunday Ellis, Ofsted Inspector, to your academy on 9 and 10 October 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This 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 as a result of Ofsted's risk assessment procedures.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We looked at school documentation, including behaviour and exclusion logs and records of governing body meetings. Inspectors visited classrooms, looking at work and talking to pupils. Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, the designated safeguarding lead and groups of pupils. We spoke with governors, a representative of the trust and parents and carers.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time safeguarding is effective.

Context

There are 1121 pupils on roll at the school. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is higher than the national average. Fewer pupils than average speak

English as an additional language. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium is below average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. Pupils usually stay at the school for most, if not all, of their secondary education, and the stability of the pupil population is higher than national levels. Staff turnover is low.

The school was inspected in May 2014 and judged to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the high quality of education recognised in the school at the time of the last inspection.

Since your appointment in September this year, you have exemplified strong and determined leadership. You are ably supported by the governing body, which shares your ambition to ensure a culture of high aspirations for all. Leaders have worked successfully as a team to consolidate and enhance the school's strengths and address the areas requiring improvement. These include those next steps arising from the previous inspection.

You are unwavering in your commitment to pupils' academic, emotional and all-round development. Pupils achieve very well. Their levels of progress and attainment are consistently significantly above national averages. Under the government's measure, known as Progress 8, the school consistently performs well above other schools nationally. Despite this, you and your team are not complacent and are working to ensure that all pupils make the strongest possible progress across the range of subjects.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils interact with each other and staff in a respectful, warm and relaxed manner. At recreation times, pupils socialise very well with each other, and they smile and laugh. Pupils take responsibility for their own behaviour. They are trusted and know the difference between right and wrong. Pupils are very proud of the inclusive and diverse nature of the school, where all individuals are welcomed and discrimination is not tolerated. The vast majority of parents who responded to the surveys issued by the governing body at parents' evenings in the last academic year are positive about the school and its ethos.

The governing body and leadership team have ensured that safeguarding is central to the school's culture. Leaders and staff place the safety, personal development and well-being of pupils at the heart of the school's work. Leaders ensure that safer recruitment procedures are followed effectively. Appropriate risk assessments are in place to manage the safety of the site and health and safety in classrooms. The trust is ensuring a new perimeter fence will be in place shortly to increase the security around the school. Medicines are stored and administered safely.

The academy trust provides the school with constructive support and challenge. The trust works closely with leaders to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that systems in place are continually reviewed and strengthened.

Leaders are highly aware of the risks that pupils in their care face, including the most vulnerable. Staff, including those with specific safeguarding responsibilities, liaise effectively with external agencies in a timely way when concerns are identified. Key staff attend weekly meetings to discuss the well-being of pupils and to check that support strategies are having a positive impact. Systems are in place to refer and record concerns, but these are overcomplicated and could be streamlined to ensure clarity.

Staff have a thorough understanding of the up-to-date statutory safeguarding guidance and know what to do if they are worried about a pupil. Staff receive training on issues such as the 'Prevent' duty and child exploitation. As a result, staff are well informed, knowledgeable and know what to do if they are worried about a pupil.

Working relationships between pupils and staff are very strong. As a result, pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they feel safe in school and that they have someone they can talk to if they have concerns. They said that bullying is very rare and, if it happened, they are confident that it would be dealt with effectively. This was backed up by inspectors' scrutiny of the school's bullying and behaviour records. Some pupils are anti-bullying ambassadors and undertake this role with maturity. Time in assemblies and in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education sessions is used effectively in order to teach pupils how to keep safe. For example, pupils learn about personal safety, child exploitation and how to keep safe online.

In 2017, progress in mathematics, while strong, was not as strong as in other core subjects. Provisional information for 2018 suggests a similar picture. Actions taken by senior leaders to improve outcomes in mathematics are already having an impact. Leaders have put in place detailed and reliable systems to check the progress of all pupils. Therefore, leaders can easily identify pupils who need additional support to make better progress. Staff are supported through a well-crafted professional development programme. This includes opportunities to share best practice and learn from other high-performing schools in the trust.

In the majority of mathematics classes visited by inspectors, teachers' secure subject knowledge and enthusiasm for their subjects were highly evident. Skilful questioning and challenging activities enable pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding. Safe and trusting learning environments mean that pupils share ideas confidently and are not afraid to get things wrong. Pupils demonstrated a sense of enjoyment towards learning. Pupils are routinely given time and opportunities to correct mistakes and to improve their work, which leads to better understanding. Current school assessment information shows that, overall, pupils are making strong progress in mathematics.

Similarly, assessment information in 2017 and 2018 provisional information suggest that students studying mathematics and science A levels made less progress than other students nationally relative to their starting points.

Leaders monitor students' progress well and ensure that additional support is provided where a student falls behind. A programme of master classes is in place across science subjects to support the most able. Teachers' clear explanations and skilled questioning support students' strong progress. Teaching challenges students to improve their responses and apply their knowledge effectively to understand new problems. However, on a few occasions, teaching did not sufficiently stretch and challenge students, including the very highest-attaining pupils. Nonetheless, the majority of students who left the sixth form at the end of Year 13 in 2018 progressed to prestigious universities, including Oxford and Cambridge.

Leaders are clear that the well-being and happiness of pupils are as important as securing academic excellence. Leaders promote a coherent, integrated and nurturing approach to the well-being of pupils. Through an extensive range of external speakers and workshops, pupils are very well supported to look after their emotional health and well-being. Newstead Wood featured as an example of strong practice in a Department for Education publication 'Supporting mental health in schools and colleges'.

Leaders think very carefully about what to include in the PSHE education programme so that it is relevant and worthwhile. External organisations are used well to deliver more specialist and sensitive topics, for example sex and relationships education. The student support room is universally seen by pupils as a valuable and safe space for advice and support if needed. Pupils have access to a school counsellor and as one sixth-form student said, 'The support here is amazing.' External helpline contact details are clearly displayed around the school and parents are provided with this useful information.

Pupils' opinions are valued and respected, and they are actively encouraged to support the school community. The elected school parliament represents the view of pupils effectively in meetings with school leaders. Sixth-form students take on a range of responsibilities, including, for example, organising feminist, LGBT and world affairs discussion groups. An impressive and wide range of extra-curricular activities develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem effectively. For example, pupils benefit from opportunities in music, sport, outdoor adventure and community engagement. In addition, other activities provide pupils with enjoyment and recreation in areas other than academic study, such as bee-keeping, yoga for the mind and knitting club.

Priorities for further improvement

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a streamlined system is in place for recording and checking pastoral matters
- the teaching of A-level science and mathematics routinely provides stretch and challenge to ensure that all students make the progress of which they are capable.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Parker
Her Majesty's Inspector