

Serco Inspections
Colmore Plaza
20 Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T: 0121 679 9163
Direct E: lewis.mackie1@serco.com



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Mr Jonathan Mellor
Headteacher
Limehurst Academy
Bridge Street
Loughborough
LE11 1NH

Dear Mr Mellor

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Limehurst Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 28 January 2015, I write on behalf of Her 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 academy.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with the no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because the Chief Inspector was concerned about behaviour at the academy.

Evidence

The inspector considered evidence including:

- observations of students' behaviour and their attitudes to learning in lessons
- observations of students' behaviour throughout the day, including discussions with students
- documentary evidence
- discussions with academy leaders and staff.

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

Leaders and managers have not taken effective action to maintain the high standards of behaviour and attitudes identified at the academy's previous inspection.

Context

Limehurst Academy is a smaller than average secondary academy with 618 students. The number of students on roll has risen from 400 to 800 students since the last inspection. The academic year 2014-15 is the first year that Year 11 students are on roll. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is above the national

average. Those students whose English is an additional language is nearly three times above the national average. Half of the students are from ethnic minorities, which is nearly twice the national average; the largest group are Bangladeshi. A quarter of the students is disabled or has special educational needs, which is above the national average. There is a high number of students who join the academy from other schools or other countries, mid-way through Key Stage 3 and 4. The academy is fully staffed.

Behaviour and safety of students

Behaviour was judged outstanding at the previous inspection in 2013. Since then, leaders have not ensured that those high standards have been maintained. In some lessons, particularly those where the pace was too slow a few students disrupted lessons by calling out or chatting while the teacher was talking. While these students' behaviour was often managed well by teaching assistants, some teachers escalated poor behaviour further by not using the academy's behaviour management steps correctly. When teachers prepared high quality learning activities appropriate to students' ability, the conduct of these students was better. While the vast majority of students conduct themselves well, both in and out of lessons, a small proportion persistently disrupt lessons and therefore hinder the learning for others.

Students told the inspector that behaviour in their lessons is mostly good but noted that some teachers do not always follow the behaviour code. The inspector witnessed the behaviour policy applied inconsistently. For example, some teachers did not challenge students who were not wearing the correct uniform. A small proportion of older students, particularly boys, openly wore trainers and no tie throughout the day without being challenged. Lateness to lessons was not always challenged strongly enough. Failure to challenge breaches in the behaviour codes reinforces poor behaviour and sets a poor example for those students who abide by the academy rules regularly.

Since the last inspection, overall students' attendance to school has remained below national averages, according to the published census data, RAISEonline. The most recent unvalidated figures, from September 2014 until now, show an improvement, which shows overall attendance rates to be just below national averages. The worst attendance is at Key Stage 4, where absence rates are much higher than students in Year 10 and 11 nationally. It is in these older year groups that the most number of students have joined the academy mid-term. Many of these students had existing problems with attendance and behaviour, which the academy has found difficult to overcome successfully, despite a range of external partnership support. Students in receipt of this support, told the inspector that they value the help and guidance given to them, as they are now managing their behaviour and attending school more often. Recent improvements in attendance are due to long-term support work with individual students and their families. The academy promotes good attendance around the school, in assemblies and during form periods. Rewards are used as incentives to improve attendance across the academy; this strategy has proved most effective in Years 7 and 8.

Of greatest concern, however, is the proportion of students who is persistently absent from school (those who only attend 85% of the time), which remains too high. Work to improve the attendance of these students has not always been

effective. Students supported by pupil premium funding and White British girls are disproportionately represented in persistent absenteeism figures. Under a third is disabled students or those with special educational needs. Leaders have a detailed and well-documented record of the support they have provided for each of the most vulnerable students in the academy. Provision to support non-attenders is now much more robust with the use of multi-agency coordinated support. Whilst this support has provided important gains for some students, such as better engagement with home-schooling, this has not always resulted in significant improved attendance to the academy.

Students are mostly supervised well, especially in the playground and canteen area. Students told the inspector that everyone gets on well with one another and there are rarely any fights. Students relate well to one another and friendship groups consist of students from various cultural backgrounds. One student told the inspector that 'everyone gets on' and that is why she loves to come to school. Students say that there is very little bullying and they are confident that teachers would deal with problems quickly. They are aware of different forms of prejudice-based bullying, including cyber-, racist- and homophobic-bullying. Students assert confidently that everyone would accept someone if they were gay, as it is 'their choice'. They are knowledgeable about keeping safe on the internet and are mostly tolerant and welcoming to newcomers to the academy, especially to those for whom English is a second language. This is because they receive regular lessons about these issues and have developed good moral and social understanding.

The canteen is well-managed and students use the area respectfully; there is almost no litter. Some students use the classrooms before school, during breaks and lunchtimes as shelter from the poor weather, but they are not always supervised. This poses a safety risk. The headteacher had already identified this risk and issued further reminders to staff about this issue.

Teachers use behaviour reporting and recording systems consistently and they log incidents meticulously. Racist and other bullying logs show a relatively high number of incidents reported last term. One reason for this is because of students' and teachers' heightened awareness of the issues in assemblies and personal and social education sessions, as well as recent training delivered to teachers in September. Scrutiny of the racist behaviour logs shows that very few students repeatedly offend. Successful sanctions include parental contact, detentions, victim support and counselling, and rehabilitation sessions for the perpetrator. Students feel safe to report incidents and feel confident that teachers will deal with the incident effectively. 'Student Services', led by the pastoral leadership team, including support staff, are well-regarded by students. Whilst leaders keep accurate logs of behaviour incidents, they have not used data systems to compile and analyse these incidents well enough. During the visit, leaders were not able to identify accurately, trends and patterns in the behaviour data clearly enough, especially regarding different groups of students. New electronic systems and software have recently been installed which supports students' tracking better, but training for staff to ensure its best use, is still to take place.

The proportion of students who are excluded from school for fixed periods of time has reduced recently. This improvement is due to long-term work by leaders to reduce this form of punishment. This work includes: a new behaviour policy, regular meetings to discuss individual concerns about students, effective behaviour plans and the establishment of an isolation unit. In addition, the headteacher currently

chairs a forum for a consortium of schools that has made arrangements to allow excluded students to attend partner schools rather than stay at home. This has proved successful in helping to reduce exclusions, particularly repeat offending. Students, interviewed by the inspector, who have experienced such sanctions, as well as post-exclusion support, say that they have improved their behaviour considerably and are achieving well at school. There have been no permanent exclusions for several years.

The headteacher and senior leaders have high ambitions for the academy. They provide a high degree of support for the students and model excellent standards of behaviour and manners in their every-day interactions with both staff and students. This is emulated by the vast majority in the academy. Students are well cared-for by teachers. Leaders enjoy a high degree of support from both staff and parents. The headteacher recognises all the areas for improvement identified in the monitoring visit and fully understands the need to act on them urgently.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve overall attendance further and reduce the rates of persistent absenteeism, especially for students eligible for government funding and White British girls.
- Ensure that high expectations of behaviour are consistently applied by staff, particularly in relation to uniform, punctuality, supervision in classrooms and low-level disruption.
- Implement robust behaviour management tracking systems, supported by staff training, so that leaders can act on the information quickly and implement effective plans to improve students' behaviour across the academy.

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

Yours sincerely

Zarina Connolly
Her Majesty's Inspector