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10 November 2017

Mr John Leigh
Headteacher
Sandbach High School and Sixth Form College
Middlewich Road
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Cheshire
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Dear Mr Leigh

No formal designation inspection of Sandbach High School and Sixth Form College

Following my visit with David Roberts, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 1 November 2017, 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 school.

The inspection was 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 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills was concerned about behaviour at the school.

Evidence

Inspectors considered evidence that included:

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

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

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

Context

There are 1,430 pupils at the school, including 298 students in the sixth form. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language is below average. The proportion of pupils who join and leave the school other than at the usual times is lower than in other secondary schools.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Observations at the beginning of the day show that pupils get their day off to a flying start. They arrive at school on time, smart and ready to learn. They happily chat with their friends. There is a visible staff presence to make sure that pupils arrive punctually at school.

Pupils' behaviour around the school is exemplary. They move quickly, smoothly and sensibly from lesson to lesson. As a result, lessons start promptly and little if any learning time is wasted by late arrivals. Pupils bring the right equipment to their lessons. They take pride in their work and pay good attention to accuracy. Their attitudes to learning are excellent. They show very high levels of self-motivation. They get on with their work without the need for the teacher to constantly look over their shoulder.

At breaktimes, pupils are happy and relaxed. They sensibly line up to buy their snacks. Teachers effectively supervise these queues and engage well with pupils. A wide range of staff, including the caretaker, leisure centre staff and kitchen staff, rightly compliment the pupils on their politeness and manners. Pupils are also very keen to take up the wide range of lunchtime activities the school offers. Inspectors agree with pupils who described the behaviour of pupils in their school as being 'mature'.

Leaders are anything but complacent. They have successfully created and sustained a calm, caring and compassionate atmosphere in which pupils thrive. It is easy to see the strong, clear and mutual respect between pupils and teachers. Pupils listen well when teachers are talking and explaining things. They move quickly from one activity to another without fuss. Teachers successfully project high expectations of all pupils and stress that there is not a moment to waste. Pupils are keen to achieve well and ask confidently for further help and advice if they are unsure.

Pupils are well looked after and cared for. As a result, they are not afraid to talk to a teacher about any worries or concerns they may have. Pupils are confident that their teachers will take their concerns seriously and help and support them. A group of pupils told inspectors of the effective support they have received in helping them

to manage and improve their behaviour. This has led to them receiving fewer sanctions and more rewards, and attendance has improved as a result.

Pupils and sixth-form students clearly understand what is expected of them when it comes to behaving well. Behaviour systems are strong, proportionate and highly effective. Pupils value the rewards that are on offer for good behaviour, especially the lunchtime pass that gets them and their friend to the front of the lunch queue.

Leaders work well with a wide range of external agencies and professionals, including the community police and the local authority safeguarding team. They are sensitive to the needs of their local community. Staff receive effective and regular safeguarding training, including on issues related to child sexual exploitation, which is helping staff spot potential safeguarding concerns.

Leaders have improved the ways in which they record incidents of bullying. Bullying is rare in the school. Leaders have recognised the importance of emotional well-being and have invested in their own team of counsellors. They recognise the importance of helping pupils deal with stress and anxiety. As well as counselling, a range of activities, including yoga and well-being week, aim to help pupils become emotionally resilient. However, leaders are not resting on their laurels and plans are in place to provide pupils with more opportunities to help them deal with the pressures of stress and anxiety.

Pupils' overall attendance is very high. However, leaders recognise that there is more work to do in helping disadvantaged pupils attend school more regularly. The number of exclusions remains very low. Behaviour records, coupled with pupils' own comments, confirm that positive behaviour continues to be a real strength of the school.

At the end of the school day, staff are highly visible and make sure that pupils leave school safely. Bus drivers are full of praise for the way in which pupils behave. Pupils regularly greet the drivers with a 'hello' and say 'goodbye' when they arrive home.

Priorities for further improvement

- further improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils so that it is at least in line with the national average
- continue to enhance the curriculum so that it provides more opportunities for pupils to improve their emotional well-being.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner, the Education Funding Agency, the board of trustees and the director of children's services for Cheshire East. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Phil Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector