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Mr Neil Dunn
Headteacher
Hylands School
Chelmsford Road
Chelmsford
CM1 3ET

Dear Mr Dunn

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Hylands School

Following my visit to your school on 12 May 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 school.

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 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about behaviour at the school.

Evidence

I considered evidence including:

- observations of students' behaviour and their attitudes to learning in lessons
- observations of students' behaviour during break times and whilst moving between lessons
- documentary evidence
- discussions with school leaders, members of staff and students.

Having evaluated all 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

Hylands School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school and has a small sixth form. It converted to become an academy school in 2011 and is part of the Kemnal Academies Trust. Most students are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language. The proportion of students who are eligible for the

pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government to support particular groups of students, including those eligible for free school meals) is higher than average. The proportion of students who join the school other than at the start of Year 7 is higher than average. The proportion of students supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also higher than average. A small number of students attend alternative provision arranged by the school.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

In recent years the number of students given fixed-term exclusions has been well above the national average. Although this figure remains high, your records show that the number of different students excluded this year has reduced. You are now making more use of internal exclusion, using an isolation room where students have to work independently, under close supervision, away from their class mates. Students told me that this sanction is particularly effective. This is reflected in the school's tracking information, which shows that the number of days students have spent in the isolation room has reduced significantly over the course of this year.

Students' conduct around the school is good. They are proud of their school and dress smartly in their uniform. Students are punctual for lessons and settle quickly to their work. Little time is wasted as students move between different classes. During breaks, and at the beginning and end of the day, students get on very well together. At lunch time, the canteen is calm and orderly and students enjoy interacting while eating their meals. Members of staff provide suitable, low-key supervision.

There is a strong sense of community at the school. Almost all students I spoke to during the inspection said that they enjoy school and that they feel safe and well looked after when they are there. Some students, who had previously experienced problems with their behaviour, spoke positively about the support that had been provided by staff, in order to address issues covering both school and home life. They described how this had helped them to improve their behaviour and, as a result, their learning.

During this inspection I visited a wide range of lessons covering different year groups. In almost all lessons students were working diligently and fully engaged in their learning. Students' relationships with teachers and fellow students were extremely positive. However, students told me that in certain classes, a small minority of students occasionally go off task and distract others.

The school's arrangements for monitoring behaviour are not as effective as they should be. For example, a disproportionate number of disadvantaged students have been subject to fixed-term exclusions over recent years. However, when reporting to the governing body about behaviour and exclusions, school leaders have not provided specific information about this group of students and the trend has continued without challenge from governors.

Priorities for further improvement

- Reduce the time that students, particularly those who are disadvantaged, spend out of lessons due to exclusion.
- Ensure that all school leaders, including governors, analyse more carefully the information that is collected regarding behaviour and set targets for improvement.
- Ensure that low level disruption is not tolerated in any class.
- Use 'student voice' to identify and address factors that impact negatively on their learning.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Essex, the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body and Ofsted's Regional Director for the East of England. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Tomkow
Her Majesty's Inspector