

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



1 December 2016

Mrs Cath Smith
Executive Headteacher
Bow School
44 Twelvetrees Crescent
London
E3 3QW

Dear Mrs Smith

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Bow School

Following my visit with Mark Phillips and Sam Hainey, Her Majesty's Inspectors, to your school on 17 November 2016, 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 and safeguarding in your school.

The inspection was a no formal designation inspection, 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 the death of a student from the school and complaints received by Ofsted about the way the school approached the behaviour and safety of students.

During this inspection, the circumstances relating to the death of a student were under investigation by the appropriate authorities. Ofsted does not have the power to investigate specific complaints and concerns relating to individual pupils but does consider such complaints when assessing the effectiveness of the school and its leadership.

Evidence

Inspectors considered evidence that included:

- observations of students' behaviour and their attitudes to learning in lessons
- staff's approach to the management of behaviour
- the school's arrangement to safeguard students
- documentary evidence

- discussions with school leaders and other staff, students, members of the governing body, the school's police officer and a senior officer from the local authority.

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

- the leadership and management of safeguarding are effective
- leaders and governors should take more effective action to improve aspects of students' behaviour.

These judgements do not take into account the appropriateness of actions taken by individuals in the specific case referenced above, which is being investigated by other agencies.

Context

Bow School is a smaller-than-average but expanding school that moved to a new site in 2014. It was a boys' school but now admits boys and girls, and has a sixth form. There are girls and boys in key stage 3 and all boys in each other year group. Most students are from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of students who are eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The number of students with a statement of educational needs or with an education, health and care plan is broadly average. The school admits a lot of students outside the normal admission time. A very small number of students attend alternative provision at the local pupil referral unit.

Safeguarding

School leaders at every level speak passionately about the importance of safeguarding and can demonstrate the role they play in keeping students safe. They place strong emphasis on having the right structures in place to respond to child protection concerns and any risks in the local community.

The deputy head, who is also the lead designated safeguarding officer, exercises strong leadership in this area, and other leaders and governors support him very well. Together, they are tenacious and timely in seeking early help for students or in making referrals when they have any concerns about their welfare. The designated lead ensures that all staff attend appropriate child protection training and that they also develop a good understanding of its key aspects, such as when to pass on concerns. Local authority officers speak with confidence about the school's management of safeguarding issues.

Key staff and governors attend meetings of the school's safeguarding committee twice a term and this group ensures that there is a spotlight on the main aspects of safeguarding practice. Student support panels for each key stage meet every Friday; this is another mechanism for ensuring that leaders and other staff identify and

highlight concerns, follow them through and hold staff to account. School leaders make good use of all the available systems to work with agencies in support of vulnerable students. Their use of the common assessment framework for a significant number of students exemplifies this. They make appropriate referrals to other agencies, for instance when there was a concern about a student at risk of sexual exploitation. School leaders make good use of the local authority advice line and are timely in making referrals about staff or students and escalating issues when necessary.

There is a wide range of appropriate training for staff and, as a result, they have a sound understanding of statutory safeguarding guidance and how to implement it in practice. They are alert in how to respond to child protection disclosures and when to pass concerns up the chain. They are confident in discussing topical issues with students, such as extremism and terrorism.

The school's safeguarding policy is up to date and its impact is evident in the way that staff at all levels can identify and respond in a well-timed way to child protection concerns. Leaders and governors adopt a rigorous approach to recruitment. Staff administer the process well and ensure that it meets statutory requirements. There are clear procedures in place for visitors, ensuring that they are aware of who to contact should they have safeguarding concerns.

There is a lot of rigour in some of the safeguarding practices in the school, such as risk assessments for school trips and checking on those who attend alternative provision. However, the same rigour is less evident in overseeing and auditing the quality of some files, such as those of some students who have special educational needs.

The curriculum helps reinforce, and builds on, what students know about keeping themselves safe. It is responsive, flexible, age-appropriate and covers a range of local and national issues, such as cyber bullying and other social media issues, violence against women, different types of extremism, personal safety and safe relationships. External speakers, including the school's police officer, play a key role in delivering some of these sessions.

Most students say that they feel safe and they have a good sense of how to keep themselves safe, for example when online. A few students in the lower school say that poor behaviour makes them feel less safe. They say that they know where to go should they have any concerns, for example about bullying, and are confident that staff will listen to them.

Overall levels of attendance are high and the proportion of students who are persistently absent has been consistently lower than the national average. Leaders have developed a clear, structured approach to promoting good attendance and responding to students who are regularly absent or have poor levels of punctuality. This includes regular and effective partnership work with the local authority's

attendance and welfare service, and proceeding with formal action when necessary. Staff make appropriate referrals to the local authority when they have any concerns about students at risk of going missing from education. Staff ensure that there is good oversight of trends. They are focussing their attention on improving the attendance of groups and individual students who have lower levels of attendance. These include some students from White backgrounds, disadvantaged students and some who have special educational needs.

There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. However, the school's survey of 100 parents shows that a high proportion of them express positive views about the steps taken by the school to keep their children safe and to manage their behaviour. School leaders take seriously the few instances where a parent raises specific concerns about behaviour, and follow them through. The school's website provides helpful information on how parents can keep their children safe from racialisation and extremism.

Behaviour

The quality of students' behaviour is a mixed picture. Overall, staff and students indicate that students' behaviour is improving and that the management of behaviour is moving in the right direction. It is evident that students demonstrate more mature and positive behaviour in key stage 4 and in the sixth form. However, students' behaviour in key stage 3 is less positive, resulting in higher rates of exclusion. The rate of fixed-term exclusion is too high compared to the national average. In 2015/16 there were proportionally higher exclusion rates for some groups. This included the Year 8 group (now Year 9), students receiving support because of their special educational needs and students from White backgrounds. There are a low number of recorded incidents of bullying or racism.

Staff supervise the corridors and play area well and are also vigilant in the local area close to the school. There is a good range of opportunities for students to socialise at lunchtime, use the prayer area or play sport in the area set aside on the rooftop. Students make good use of the rooftop area and show a competitive edge as they engage in group sport. Most students mix well together in the playground and move purposefully to lessons. The majority of students demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. However, inspectors observed some instances where there was low-level disruption in lessons and students did not engage well in learning. They also heard some swearing and name-calling by a few students as they moved along the corridor between lessons. Some students lack self-discipline and need staff to direct them too much. Students also confirmed that there are a number of instances, particularly in the lower school, where some students do not listen well enough in lessons and where they show a lack of respect for others.

School leaders implemented a new behaviour policy in June 2016 but have not reviewed or ratified it formally. It is still relatively new for staff and students and is taking time to bed in. Its impact has yet to be seen in reducing incidents of exclusion

from lessons and fixed-term exclusions. There is a balance in the policy between strategies to promote and acknowledge good behaviour and a range of sanctions to tackle poor behaviour. However, students are of the view that there is not enough emphasis on encouraging and recognising good behaviour. They are also of the view that there are some inconsistencies in the way teachers manage behaviour and set a good example for them.

Priorities for further improvement

- School leaders should take more effective action to improve behaviour by:
 - reviewing the impact of the newly introduced behaviour policy
 - ensuring that there is greater consistency in the way staff manage behaviour and model it for students
 - improving the quality of students' behaviour, especially in the lower school
 - reducing the incidence of exclusion from lessons and from school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the corporate director for children's services in Tower Hamlets. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Kennedy
Her Majesty's Inspector