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Helen Woodcock
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Woodcock

No formal designation inspection of Rossett School

Following my visit with Michael Wardle, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 15 September 2021, 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 your school.

This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for no formal designation (NFD) inspections. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about behaviour and attitudes of pupils at the school.

We do not give graded judgements on NFD inspections. However, if we find some evidence that overall standards may be declining, but where no serious concerns have been identified, then the next inspection will normally be a section 5 inspection and will be brought forward. If we have serious concerns, we will deem the NFD inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

Evidence

We considered evidence that included:

- meetings with the headteacher and senior leaders with responsibility for behaviour and attitudes, attendance, safeguarding, curriculum, student experience and personal development
- discussions with the special educational needs coordinator, the chair of the board of trustees and a parent governor

- observations of pupils' behaviour in lessons and at social times, and observation of pupils as they arrived at and exited the school
- conversations with pupils both formally and informally, including with single-sex groups of pupils
- discussions with staff, including support staff and early career teachers. Conversations with staff took place both in groups and individually and in both formal and informal situations, including at duty times
- scrutiny of documents relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour, which looked at minutes of governors' meetings and headteacher's reports. We also reviewed the findings of reports produced externally, results of leaders' surveys of staff, pupils and parents, and Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance have taken effective action to improve behaviour and secure consistently positive attitudes to learning.

Context

Rossett School is a larger than average school. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The school is a stand-alone academy but is part of the Red Kite Alliance of schools. Two new deputy headteachers took up post in September 2021, as well as a new assistant headteacher with responsibility for behaviour and attitudes. A new head of sixth form and an associate assistant headteacher were appointed in September 2020. A new finance director joined the school in June 2019.

Main Findings

Pupils' behaviour in school is calm and orderly. Leaders have implemented a new 'meet and greet' system at the beginning of lessons. Pupils and staff say this is successful in helping lessons to start smoothly. Inspectors agree. Relationships between pupils and teachers in lessons are positive. The behaviour policy is well understood by pupils. Almost all pupils believe that this policy is successful in helping to prevent their lessons being disrupted. Some pupils told inspectors that it is not always applied consistently. During the inspection, inspectors saw very few instances of low-level disruption in lessons.

Leaders, pupils and teachers told inspectors that the COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions had a negative impact on the usual behaviour of the school. In response, leaders made improving behaviour a priority at the beginning of the new year. New software to report and track behaviour has been introduced. Staff told inspectors that leaders respond appropriately to incidents logged using this system. Most staff reported that behaviour had improved at the beginning of term. Leaders' actions clearly connect to the desire to build an inclusive school.

Social times are well organised. Pupils from different year groups have their own space in the school. While this began as a response to COVID-19 restrictions, leaders have kept this system in place. Pupils are comfortable around each other. The atmosphere at lunchtimes and breaktimes is positive. Relationships between pupils and staff supervising at these times is positive. Pupils organise their own games, such as football and card games. When moving to lessons, pupils do so independently and promptly.

Systems for monitoring pupils' attendance are clear and well understood by staff. Leaders' risk assessments for the small number of pupils in danger of absconding are thorough. There are clearly outlined actions for key members of staff. Leaders' actions to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence are wide ranging and supportive. These include mentoring programmes for pupils and personalised letters to parents. Evidence suggests that these actions are leading to improvements in attendance. Levels of absence and persistent absence for some vulnerable pupils are too high. Leaders are aware of the need to continue to support vulnerable pupils as they return to normal routines.

Fixed-term exclusions are used where necessary and the need to use them is reducing. Leaders' strategies to improve behaviour include working closely with parents and carers and working closely with individual pupils when making subject option choices. Most pupils spoken with know that these strategies help them. However, some of the most vulnerable pupils are still most at risk of exclusion. Leaders have rightly identified that staff need more training to work successfully with these pupils. Leaders have recently delivered behaviour training for staff working with vulnerable pupils and those who have an education, health and care plan.

Pupils spoken with say that they are not worried about bullying. Almost all pupils and staff told inspectors that racist, sexist and homophobic language were not heard at school. Some female teachers reported that, on rare and isolated occasions, they had been subject to sexualised comments made by pupils. When this happens, leaders have systems in place to deal with it appropriately. Teachers told inspectors that they felt well supported when this happened to them.

A minority of pupils told inspectors that a small number of their peers used homophobic language unthinkingly in friendship groups. One pupil reported that this was done without malice but 'it still has an impact'. Leaders take appropriate action when they become aware of this. Recently, leaders planned a lesson highlighting the England football team's support of Pride. There have been assemblies on harmful language. The personal, social and health education curriculum has been reviewed and relaunched as the personal development curriculum for the current year. Pupils have had an input into this curriculum. Leaders need to build on this to ensure that all pupils think about how their words may affect others.

Governors and trustees are well informed about the school's behaviour systems. The chair of trustees and the headteacher meet regularly. This means that governors can challenge the work of leaders. School leaders conduct surveys of pupils, parents and staff. These

help governors to understand perceptions of behaviour across the school. Most parents who responded to Ofsted's Parent View and wrote to inspectors shared the view that their children feel safe and are well behaved.

Additional support

Leaders have commissioned external partners to help them review systems for improving attendance. Leaders have also asked external partners to review and present analysis of behaviour information to governors. This allows governors to scrutinise and assure themselves about the impact of leaders' work in relation to behaviour.

Priorities for further improvement

- Some pupils are unaware of how their choice of language can be upsetting to other pupils. Leaders should raise pupils' awareness of the impact that their choice of language has on other pupils, so that pupils make better choices.
- Attendance of vulnerable pupils and those entitled to free school meals is too low and exclusions for these pupil groups are too high. Leaders should continue to develop their focus on these pupils as they return to school fully so that attendance improves, and exclusions decline further.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Vellensworth
Her Majesty's Inspector