

5 October 2018

Dear Parents and Carers

Further to our letter of 20 September 2018 advising that Ofsted had visited the school, we have now received the letter from Ofsted which is available to view on our website. Safeguarding was judged as effective and I am pleased to share the inspection findings in full below:

Inspection Findings

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. There is an 'it can happen here' attitude from all staff and pupils. Staff receive regular safeguarding training. Leaders ensure that all staff receive, and understand, the most recent statutory guidance relating to safeguarding and protecting children. Staff attend weekly briefings where they hear safeguarding updates, concerns with pupils or emerging risks that are pertinent to the locality.

Leaders listen carefully to the opinions and concerns of all pupils. For example, some pupils reported that the tight corridors and narrow stairs made them anxious when overcrowded. Accordingly, leaders changed the way they dismiss pupils from lessons in areas where pupils reported the most congestion. However, a minority of pupils told inspectors that there are still a few 'hot-spots' where movement up and down stairs is still a cause for concern. Leaders intend to further review pupil movement around the school to address this matter.

There is a high staff presence during break and lunchtime. The vast majority of pupils say that they feel safe. They told inspectors that there are many staff in the school that they could speak to if they had a concern about themselves or a friend. Pupils have a thorough understanding of the different forms of bullying. They say that some bullying does occur, mainly name-calling, but that systems are in place that enable pupils to report bullying anonymously. Furthermore, pupils are confident that any issues are dealt with in a timely manner and that they are resolved most of the time.

Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding know their roles well. Systems are in place that allow staff to record any 'nagging doubts' about a pupil's welfare or more serious matters. Leaders respond swiftly and appropriately when staff report a concern. They have built effective relationships with external agencies such as the police and local doctor's surgery. This enables leaders to call upon additional professional support for pupils if needed. Leaders conduct robust checks on all staff, including temporary contractors who were on site during the inspection. Such checks ensure that children are safe.

Inspection evidence demonstrates that some pupils' understanding of how to stay safe outside of school is less developed. In addition, a small minority of pupils in key stage 3 participate in overly boisterous play-fighting during break. Some teachers do not always notice or take effective action to stop this.

Leaders' plans to improve the school are well-aligned to the findings of this inspection. This demonstrates that the executive principal and members of the trust have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Together, the executive principal and other senior leaders have started to improve aspects of the school's provision that were well overdue. For example, staff and pupils told inspectors that the standard of pupils' behaviour was much higher this academic year. They suggest that this is, in part, due to the new positive discipline policy introduced by leaders at the start of September 2018. Although in its infancy, most staff apply the new policy consistently. Pupils are eager to do as their teachers ask so they can receive reward stamps in their planners. Pupils wear their new uniform with pride and come prepared for learning with the correct equipment. During the inspection the vast majority of pupils were courteous and welcoming and some politely held open doors for staff.

In fact, evidence presented by the school highlighted to the inspection team that improvements in pupils' behaviour pre-dated the introduction of the new behaviour policy. The proportion of pupils who are excluded for a fixed period has reduced over the previous three years and is now below the national average. Furthermore, leaders have developed suitable systems to reduce the possibility of repeat exclusions. Leaders' communication with parents of pupils who are excluded is frequent and pupils receive appropriate advice and guidance to help them return to school and catch up on missed work. However, inspection evidence demonstrates that the rates of temporary exclusions for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities increased in 2017/18.

Rates of attendance improved considerably during the academic year 2017/18 for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Disadvantaged pupils continue to be absent more often than other pupils nationally, but this difference is steadily diminishing. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school has reduced over time and overall figures are now broadly in line with the national average. Pupils' punctuality to lessons is variable. While in many instances this is due to the size of the school site, it must be noted that some pupils do not always display an eagerness to arrive at their lessons on time.

Following a recent review of the school's curriculum at key stage 3, leaders identified that pupils would benefit from regular and more structured personal development. Accordingly, leaders have introduced 'aspiring for personal excellence' lessons to improve the personal, social, health and economic education programme so that pupils' understanding of British values and resilience are developed further.

Leaders receive a high standard of support from the trust in all aspects of the school's provision. The high-quality training provided by the trust has improved leadership considerably. In addition to this, the school has benefited from the support of a school improvement partner from outside the trust. A local leader of education has also conducted a recent review of safeguarding practices.

Priorities for further improvement

- continue to develop the pastoral curriculum to strengthen pupils' personal development and understanding of British values
- improve pupils' punctuality to lessons.

Ofsted have highlighted many improvements since their last monitoring visit. It is especially pleasing to note that students themselves are reporting much higher standards of behaviour and are responding well to the higher expectations we have for them. We are very proud of all our students and I am delighted that Ofsted commented on how courteous and welcoming they are on a day to day basis.

We agree with the areas for improvement and, as Ofsted recognised, these are already a clear part of our School Development Plan. Staff and governors are fully committed to delivering further improvements at Driffield School and Sixth Form and we look forward to continuing to work together to provide the best possible school for your child.

Finally, I would like to again praise our students for their contribution to such a positive start to the school year.

Thank you for your on-going support of the school.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Bae', followed by a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mr Scott Ratheram
Executive Principal