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Carrie Norman
Principal
Peckover Primary Academy
Leverington Road
Wisbech
PE13 1PJ

Dear Mrs Norman

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Peckover Primary Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 27 November 2014, 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 during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss behaviour at the academy.

The inspection was an unannounced 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 the Chief Inspector was concerned about behaviour and attendance at the academy.

Evidence

I considered a range of evidence including:

- observations of pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning in lessons
- observations of pupils' behaviour throughout the day, including discussion with pupils
- analysis of attendance and exclusion records
- documentary evidence
- discussions with academy leaders, staff and the director of primary provision for the Brooke Weston Academy Trust.

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

Leaders and managers have taken effective action to improve behaviour, secure consistently positive attitudes to learning and improve attendance.

Context

Peckover Primary Academy is larger than the average primary school. The number of pupils on roll is 350. There are 41 children of pre-compulsory school age in reception and 12 have just turned five. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average (42%), as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding (additional funding provided for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority) is average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is also average; seven pupils have a statement of special education needs. The percentage of pupils who join or leave partway through their primary school education is high.

The school became an academy in April 2013. The Headteacher who was in post at the time of the 2011 inspection left the school in December 2013. You were the acting Principal for a period five months before being appointed as the permanent Principal in May 2014. Staff turnover is high and the school is experiencing some difficulty in recruiting staff. The Brooke Weston Academy Trust provides regular support to the school.

Behaviour, attendance and safety of pupils

Since the previous inspection in November 2011, and significantly this academic year, the behaviour and attendance of pupils are much improved. This is as a result of the academy's improved leadership and your very effective management of the small number of pupils who do not attend school regularly and those who display very challenging behaviour. Many parents said that since your appointment as Principal you quickly gained their trust and significantly improved communication with families because you are highly visible around the school. In the word of some parents: *'you are brilliant'*, and *'staff sort stuff out quickly, if there are any issues.'*

Pupils carefully listen to their teachers. They sit quietly to ensure they understand what they have to do and quickly get on with their work. They concentrate particularly well and listen to their classmates very respectfully. For example, in guided reading, all pupils followed the text very carefully when someone was reading aloud, showing high levels of respect and tolerance when the reader lacked confidence. Pupils wasted no time answering the teacher's questions because they had followed closely the meaning of the story. When they were asked to move into groups or pairs, they did this without fuss.

Pupils learn the school's routines from a young age. In reception, expectations of good behaviour are high. Children responded very well when the compact disk player would not work. They waited patiently and were then quickly absorbed in their listening and singing activities.

During the day, I saw some exemplary behaviour. When getting ready to go to the town library, pupils lined up very sensibly. Once the excitement of wearing the high visibility jackets had passed, pupils understood that they were representing Peckover Academy in Wisbech. They were clearly proud of their school. In a physical education lesson, behaviour was outstanding. Pupils were spontaneously complimentary of the expertise of others.

Although rare, there are occasions when pupils are not learning as much as they should. You know where this is the case and are taking action to improve attitudes to learning in these groups. However, not all of your strategies have had full impact. For example, I saw some pupils not confident enough to find things out for themselves. In these situations, they either ended up queuing at the teacher's table wasting precious learning time, chatting or messing about instead of getting on with their work. Pupils who speak English as an additional language usually try very hard but, in some cases, when they stumble on words they do not readily reach for a dictionary or ask a friend.

The Nest, used to support pupils who need it, is a welcoming, well-organised place. It is used for a variety of purposes, such as bereavement support and counselling. The school's inclusion manager knows each pupil and families very well and carefully notes details of incidents, interventions and agreed actions. Pupils sent to The Nest do not miss curriculum time because class work is provided for them. However, the school's monitoring of The Nest's use is underdeveloped. This is because the case-by-case hand-written recording makes it difficult for you and senior leaders to analyse trends. The lack of a user-friendly system bringing together all the information limits your ability to evaluate the effectiveness of this provision. In addition, it restricts governors' ability to hold the school to account for the impact of this important resource.

Behaviour around the school and on the playground is good. Pupils move in an orderly fashion around the corridors. They are courteous to each other and readily hold doors for staff and visitors. Some pupils asked to make an appointment to speak with me because they wanted to tell me how good their school was. Pupils told me that the rules are applied fairly. Levels of staff supervision are high and pupils rarely need to be reminded of the rules. Arrangements to welcome pupils and parents at the beginning of the day and ensure that they go home safely at the end of the day run smoothly.

The dining hall is a lively place. Pupils eat together calmly. Noise levels are reasonable and reflect pupils' joyful conversations. I was invited to sit at the '*birthday table*'; a good example of how children respond positively to being treated with respect. The conversation at the table was mature with friends politely asking their host permission to leave when they had finished their special birthday lunch. Some parents are rightly concerned that children who bring a packed lunch eat in their classroom and miss opportunities to socialise and extend their friendship groups. You are aware of this issue and have staggered lunchtimes to maximise the

use of the dining hall. With the support of governors, you continue to search for creative solutions to ensure that all pupils eat their lunch in the best possible conditions.

In the past two years, although no pupils were permanently excluded from school, the rate of fixed-term exclusions was above the national average. This year's data show significant improvement. With the support of the inclusion manager and the special needs coordinator, you help pupils and families as quickly as possible so that inappropriate behaviour is managed well and issues do not escalate. About 14 pupils are currently receiving targeted support and two pupils have had an incident of fixed-term exclusion this term. Both were for valid reasons. I spoke to pupils who had recently received support and all said that *'they want to be good'* and that they found staff very fair. These pupils said that they now know exactly what *'making positive choices'* mean. One pupil said: *'it is mandatory to behave well in this school.'*

The pupils I spoke with during the day, including those with a disability or those learning to speak English, consistently said that bullying is rare and always addressed promptly. All felt confident that they could talk to any member of staff if they were bullied. They also found the Child Line workshops informative. They clearly explained that racism and homophobic bullying were wrong and that they were tolerant of someone being different to them. They were well informed of the dangers of social networking sites. Parents also gave examples of how the school had *'nipped issues in the bud'* in relation to the rare incidents of bullying.

Attendance, judged inadequate at the previous inspection, has improved significantly. From below average at 92.6% and in the bottom 20% of schools in the country for attendance, it is now above average at 96.6%. This is the result of several effective strategies including: rewards and certificates to promote regular attendance, the much loved Stanley Bear and Fudge Bear looked after by classes with the best attendance, well-targeted work with parents and carers and good understanding of pupils' emotional needs.

At the start of the day, I observed several families arriving late. All were highly apologetic reflecting the high expectation you and the office staff have of the importance of arriving at school on time. You use reminders and penalty notices sensitively where absence remains persistent.

Priorities for further improvement

- Analyse the use of The Nest for trends and patterns and provide detailed information to governors so that they can check the effectiveness of this provision.
- Enable all pupils to improve their self-discipline and eagerness to learn even when not immediately supervised by an adult.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Cambridgeshire, the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Marianick Ellender-Gelé
Her Majesty's Inspector