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27 November 2014

Dawn Baker
Lawford Mead Junior School
Trent Road
Chelmsford
CM1 2JH

Dear Mrs Baker

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Lawford Mead Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 26 November 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because the Chief Inspector was concerned about behaviour at the school.

Evidence

I considered a range of evidence including:

- observations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning in lessons
- observations of pupils' behaviour throughout the day
- discussions with pupils
- discussions with school leaders and staff
- documentary evidence
- school attendance data

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

Leaders and managers have not taken effective action to maintain the good standards of behaviour identified at the school's previous inspection.

Context

Lawford Meads Junior School is smaller than the average primary school. It currently has eight mixed-age classes. The proportion of pupils that are eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority) is well above average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is broadly average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is average, but is above average for those supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational need.

The school is in a state of transition. The junior school and the neighbouring infant schools will both close at the end of this academic year. A new primary school will open in September 2015. Work to build the new school has started and the school's outdoor facilities, and especially the playground, have been greatly reduced.

You are currently working as headteacher across the junior and infant school, and have been appointed as the headteacher of the new primary school. A new deputy head teacher started work in the junior school in April 2014.

Behaviour and Safety of pupils

The behaviour of pupils was judged to be good at the school's previous inspection in February 2011. This is no longer the case because pupils' attitudes to their learning are not consistently positive. Teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour are not always high enough and senior leaders do not analyse and respond to behaviour over time sufficiently well.

Lessons are generally calm. Where teachers have high expectations of pupils, they work hard and little time is wasted. In these classes, teachers frequently assess how well pupils are doing and keep them focused on their work. Relationships are positive and the pupils understand what teachers expect of them. This is not the case in other classes, where too much time is spent dealing with low-level disruption such as calling-out and chatting when the teacher is talking. In these classes teachers accept slower rates of work and do not challenge pupils who are doing little work quickly enough. There are similar differences in the quality of pupils' presentation across the school: where teachers have high expectations, pupils' presentation is improving and their work is increasingly well-organised. In contrast, some pupils in other classes where expectations are not as high present their work with less care. Mistakes are scribbled out and there is little evidence of pride in their books.

You have established a range of interventions and support plans for pupils whose behaviour is poor. These are effective and pupils receiving this support say that the school has helped them to improve. The impact of this small group of pupils on the

school is generally well-managed, but there are occasions when too much of teachers' and senior leaders' time is occupied in dealing with individual pupils. You and your senior leadership team are not monitoring the impact of the many initiatives to improve behaviour rigorously enough. As a result, you are not in a position to evaluate the impact of the school's interventions with precision. You are already gathering information such as racist incidents, bullying and serious incidents concerning poor behaviour, but you are not yet assessing if the behaviour code is improving things, or how often individual pupils require behavioural support over time.

Pupils' behaviour around the school and in the playground also requires improvement. The beginning of the school day is calm and well-supervised. Teachers welcome their classes and learning starts almost immediately. The behaviour at playtime and lunchtime is, however, too boisterous on the playground, and 'play-fighting' is common. Pupils say that this sometimes gets out of hand and results in squabbles and occasional fighting. You are trying to find solutions to the reduced space that pupils have to play in, and have introduced structured, adult-led games for the pupils. Those that join in enjoy these games and look forward to them but staff on duty do too little to intervene and prevent 'play-fighting'. Pupils generally move around the school sensibly and are respectful of the building. They are very curious about the new building and many use the observation windows to check on progress. In assembly, pupils in Years 3 and 4 listen well and contribute with enthusiasm. Some pupils in Years 5 and 6 are less attentive and try to distract others, setting a poor example for younger pupils.

Your strategies to improve attendance, which include much closer monitoring and better communication with parents, have been successful. Levels of attendance were low at the time of the last inspection. This situation has steadily improved and pupils' attendance is now in line with the national average.

Rates of exclusion have been well above the national level in recent years. You have reviewed the school's policy to exclusion and have introduced a system of 'internal exclusion' where pupils remain in school and work, usually under the supervision of a senior leader. As a result, far fewer pupils have been excluded from school. The number of pupils being 'internally excluded' are also reducing. Pupils who have received an 'internal exclusion' this term recognise that this is a better approach as they continue to learn.

You provide governors with clear information regarding behaviour. This includes a breakdown of racist incidents, exclusion and attendance data and what the school is doing to improve behaviour.

External support

The local authority provides the school with appropriate support, and has worked alongside school leaders to prepare for the opening of the new primary school in September 2015.

Priorities for further improvement

- Raise teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour in all classes, so that it matches that of the most effective teachers.
- Reduce instances of low-level disruption in lessons.
- Gather and analyse behaviour records so that trends or patterns can be identified and the impact of intervention strategies can be measured.
- Improve behaviour on the playgrounds, and eliminate 'play fighting'.
- Enable older pupils to set a good example for younger pupils throughout the school day.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Essex and the Chair of the Governing Body. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Moodie
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc Chair of the Governing Body