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29 March 2016

Judi Johnson-Clarke
Headteacher
John Donne CofE Lower School
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Dear Mrs Johnson-Clarke

No formal designation monitoring inspection of John Donne CofE Lower School

Following my visit to your school on 15 March 2016, 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 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about pupils' behaviour and the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss pupils' behaviour and the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.

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
- discussions with parents and pupils
- meeting with governors and the school's improvement consultant
- analysis of attendance and exclusion records
- documentary evidence, including the single central record
- discussions with office staff, teaching assistants and adults supervising morning play and lunchtime.

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

Safeguarding is effective.
Pupils' behaviour is good.

Context

John Donne Lower is a small school with 79 pupils on roll. There is a Nursery and Reception class and two mixed-age classes, a Year1/2 class and a Year 3/4 class. Almost all pupils come from a White British background. The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children looked after by the local authority and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is well below average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below average. In September 2015 the school appointed two new teachers to cover maternity leave.

Behaviour of pupils

Since the previous inspection, the good behaviour of pupils has been maintained. With the support of staff, you are focusing relentlessly on developing pupils' positive attitudes to school. Your management of the small number of pupils who display challenging behaviour is helping them to improve. Many parents said that teachers and teaching assistants are very nice, caring and approachable.

Pupils say that bad behaviour is not tolerated and that any issues are dealt with quickly. They explained that they would have no hesitation in telling an adult if they were worried about anything. I checked the school's records and observed behaviour at break and lunchtime. I found that pupils were well supervised and played together sensibly. Pupils explained that they were always encouraged to be kind to others and that they followed the schools' Christian values. The council members were proud to explain that everyone is encouraged to do their best and to get on with one another. Promoting the well-being of all pupils is at the heart of everything you and your staff do.

Pupils said that they are happy at school. They listen very carefully to their teachers, understand what they have to do and quickly get on with their work. In the Reception class, for example, all pupils followed the instructions carefully in physical education so as not to bump into others as they practised their 'being wobbly' movements. Pupils show high levels of respect and tolerance when working in groups. The level of excitement and enthusiasm was high in the well-planned science lessons organised as part of Science Week. Even when the experiments did not go as planned, pupils wasted no time in answering the teachers' probing questions that kept their interest high. Behaviour was exemplary in these science sessions because pupils were 'doing magic' and were curious about what would happen next.

Staff know pupils and families very well and carefully note details of incidents, interventions and agreed actions. As a result, issues are addressed promptly. The

school should consider developing pupils' genuine participation further, such as through a Pupil Voice initiative or restorative justice methods. The pupils I spoke with during the day consistently said that bullying is rare and always addressed promptly. All felt confident that they could talk to a teacher if they were bullied. Staff use rewards effectively, such as the sticker chart, to promote good behaviour.

Safeguarding

Leaders and staff ensure that safeguarding and child protection arrangements keep pupils safe. Governors hold the school to account for all its work, particularly in relation to safeguarding and child protection processes.

Pupils feel safe at the school because safeguarding arrangements are robust. Staff are fully aware of what to do if they have a concern and you ensure that their training is up to date. Safeguarding children is a standing item on the agenda of your weekly meetings with staff. You deal with sensitive matters well and go 'the extra mile' to ensure that families in need of intensive support are helped so that their children's education does not suffer at times of crisis. Pupils are well informed about the dangers of social networking sites. The risk assessments for school outings contain all the required checks.

A few parents, however, feel that communication with families could be improved because they are concerned about low-level bullying. Some feel that they are not being listened to. The inspection found no evidence to support their concerns. Families are often invited to school events, staff are visible around the school and the website is informative. Parents' consultation evenings and specific workshops provide further opportunities for parents to liaise with the school.

External support

The school works well with external agencies to secure effective support for pupils. The local authority recently conducted a thorough check of processes and procedures, particularly those concerning safeguarding and the recording of incidents. You acted promptly on the minor points of advice identified at the time. You are working well with your improvement consultant, who visits the school frequently.

Governors are knowledgeable and conscientious. They act on the helpful guidance contained in the local authority's updates, 'Governors' Essentials', covering all aspects of safeguarding and child protection.

Priorities for further improvement

- work even more closely with parents and carers to improve communication and make John Donne CofE Lower a school of choice in the local community.



I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Education for the Diocese of St Albans, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Central Bedfordshire Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Marianick Ellender-Gelé

Her Majesty's Inspector