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23 January 2015

Mr Chris Field  
Headteacher  
Selly Oak Trust School  
Oak Tree Lane  
Selly Oak  
Birmingham  
B29 6HZ

Dear Mr Field

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Selly Oak Trust School**

Following my visit to your school on 22 January 2015, 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 behaviour in your school.

The inspection was a 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 at the school.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection I considered a range of evidence including:

- observations of students' behaviour and their attitudes to learning in lessons
- observations of students' behaviour throughout the day, including at the start to the school day, breaktime and lunchtime
- discussions with students about their views and experiences
- documentary evidence about behaviour, including bullying
- discussions with you, your deputy headteacher, staff and governors about how you manage and monitor behaviour and attendance.

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

Leaders and managers have taken effective action to maintain the high standards of behaviour and attitudes identified at the school's previous inspection.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, 40 more students have joined the school and there are now 387 on roll. You have opened a primary class for pupils in Years 5 and 6. Over two thirds of students are boys. Over a third are from minority ethnic groups and around 50 students speak English as an additional language. Over half the students are eligible for the pupil premium, government funding to support disadvantaged students and those looked after by the local authority. A small proportion of students are looked after.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Behaviour around the school and in lessons during the inspection was consistently good. The management of behaviour was also good. You and your senior leaders have a very accurate understanding of behaviour in the school and an excellent knowledge of your students' needs.

The students I spoke to during the inspection felt that behaviour in their school was usually good. One student took the realistic view that there were sometimes some behaviour issues but this was 'really just a few individuals, like any school.' Others agreed. Students understood well how the reward and sanctions system works. They value the rewards system and understand how it is linked to demonstrating good learning behaviours, such as remaining in all lessons, listening, concentrating and co-operating with others.

In the lessons visited during the inspection, students generally showed positive attitudes to their learning. They responded very well to the excellent routines in the nurture classes, swapping seamlessly from one activity to another with very little prompting from staff. In other lessons, students coped well with taking a test, were enthusiastic about answering some challenging questions, encouraged each other to take part in activities and followed instructions well. There are very positive relationships between staff and students. Students show respect to staff and to each other and understand the expectation that they will focus on their learning in lessons.

Behaviour at break and lunchtimes was also good and there was a pleasant atmosphere throughout. Students have a range of choices at these times, which helps them to feel relaxed and safe. For example, some students stayed inside or went to clubs, some played football, others stood and chatted, and another group took part in a role play game, which they organised and managed themselves. Supervision by staff was active and visible. Staff wear high visibility jackets so students can instantly find them if they need to, and carefully support students to interact well socially. Staff's effectiveness in this role is closely monitored by senior leaders, who give advice as necessary.

Evidence from leaders, staff, pupils and governors and from the documents and data you showed me indicates that the very positive behaviour I saw during the day, both in lessons and around the school, is typical.

Leaders use a wide range of support and strategies to help students with different needs to manage and improve their behaviour. Certain students are allowed to use a series of 'pods' around the school – calm spaces with low lighting and no doors –

when they feel they need to be away from other people for a short while. The use of these is carefully monitored so that staff always know where students are and if any student is missing too much learning. Six class-based groups allow the youngest students and those with more complex needs to have the same staff for most of their lessons. This creates consistency and helps them to manage their behaviour and emotions. The learning support base, 'Solar', and the internal exclusion centre are other effective strategies which help to re-engage students in the daily life of the school. Good attention is paid to meeting students' special educational needs, for example there is a well-equipped sensory room which supports both behaviour and learning.

Students talked very positively about the support they receive from the school to improve their behaviour when they need it. They were able to explain the different strategies they had been taught to use to manage sometimes complex behaviours. Examples included having 'time out' cards to enable them to leave a lesson for a short time if they could not cope, having safe spaces to go to if they felt angry or upset, supporting younger students at break time when they might otherwise get into trouble, and channelling specific skills into gaining a qualification. Those who had moved from other schools felt settled and well supported. One student commented 'the difference here is that people want you to succeed, and you know they do.'

Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now 91.42%. Persistent absence has fallen, though it remains high and leaders know this is still a priority for improvement. The rate of fixed term exclusion is similar to the time of the last inspection. Around 7.4% of students were excluded at least once during last academic year. However only a very small number of students were excluded more than once, indicating that the strategy is not over-used and generally has a positive impact on students' behaviour.

All aspects of behaviour, both positive and negative, are carefully recorded and closely analysed by senior leaders and this information is used to enable them to take well-targeted action. For example, information about the use of the 'on call' system is used to improve the support given to individual students or staff. Physical intervention is used sparingly but is also carefully analysed and reviewed.

The school has done a great deal of effective work to help students understand bullying, to counter it within school and to give students strategies to deal with it outside school. When bullying does take place, creative solutions are found. For example during the inspection, a member of staff was working effectively with four younger girls to help them to understand some of their friendship issues and had elicited the help of an older student mentor. Each case of bullying is carefully overseen by senior leaders until it is resolved. Importantly, leaders have improved the way they communicate with parents about bullying issues.

At the time of the previous inspection in November 2013, although inspectors judged behaviour in the school to be good, a number of staff expressed concerns about the way in which behaviour was managed. You and senior leaders took this concern seriously. You rightly identified the need to focus more closely on the strategies that individual students need to learn well and the support that staff needed to hone their skills. Documentary evidence shows that staff feel well supported, that training has been beneficial, and that staff's attendance at school is high.

Over the past eighteen months, all staff have received a range of training about how to help students to learn more effectively. There has been a careful analysis of students' individual learning needs and a focus on strategies to enable them to concentrate better. This creative work has involved occupational therapists, who have supported the school to put together 'sensory boxes' with a range of equipment to help students to focus on their learning and to stay in class. Staff who have trialled this approach are very enthusiastic about the positive impact it has had on students. Others new to the system are keen to implement it. Likewise, staff have welcomed the more detailed profiles of students, held on the school's intranet, which enable them to better understand students' learning, personal and social needs. Recent training has focused on the impact that reading skills can have on students' responses to different lessons. Visual timetables and cues have been introduced and these are helping students to know what to expect during the day and in each lesson. All these strategies rightly emphasise the close relationship between teaching, learning and behaviour. Some work has begun on how to make classrooms more appropriate for students who find too much visual stimulus distracting.

One of the senior leadership team is available each morning for a 'drop in' session. This is appreciated by staff as they feel they can gain quick access to support or talk through the solution to a problem.

Governors have a good overview of behaviour, attendance and safety in the school. They use the school's own data to ask challenging questions and to evaluate whether actions are as effective as they should be. During their visits they observe students' behaviour first-hand and talk to them about their experiences. Like you and your team, they are determined to make the school as good as it can possibly be.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Audit all classrooms to see how well they help students to concentrate without distraction while still displaying students' work and relevant learning prompts to good effect.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham local authority, to 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

Sue Morris-King  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

Cc Chair of the Governing Body