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Ms Alyson Smith
Headteacher
Phoenix Junior Academy
Glencoe Road
Chatham
ME4 5QD

Dear Ms Alyson Smith

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Phoenix Junior Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 10 March 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 academy.

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 academy.

Evidence

Inspectors considered evidence including:

- observations of pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning in lessons
- observations of pupils' behaviour throughout the day, including a discussion with a group of pupils
- documentary evidence, including records of governors' monitoring, information about pupils' attendance and exclusions
- discussions with school leaders and staff.

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

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

Context

This is an average-sized junior school with a diverse ethnic population. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Most of the other ethnic groups are represented in smaller numbers. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is above average. The

proportion of pupils for whom the academy receives additional funds (pupil premium) is well above average. This is additional funding for those known to be

eligible for free school meals or who are in the care of the local authority. The academy provides a daily breakfast club. The academy is part of The Fort Pitt Academy Trust. An Executive Principal from the trust works part time with this academy and the other two academies in the trust.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Parents, pupils and staff agree that there have been improvements in the conduct of pupils at break and lunchtime. Leaders have established a set of effective approaches to ensure that pupils behave sensibly when playing. These include clear expectations of how pupils line up at the end of play time and the well-planned deployment of staff on duty in the playground. Staff on duty vigilantly monitor pupils and are deeply aware of those who may need closer guidance on how to behave well. Supervision staff quickly intervene to mediate if pupils are finding it difficult to agree. Consequently, the overwhelming majority of pupils say they feel safe when they are playing outside at break and lunchtime. Teachers manage the corridors outside their classrooms well during change-overs between lessons. However, the academy has long corridors and some pupils' behaviour is silly when they are moving between lessons and out of teachers' view.

Leaders have introduced well-thought-out sanctions for the small number of pupils who find it difficult to manage their behaviour inside and outside of lessons. For example, if pupils do not meet expectations when they are on report, or they do not behave as expected on the playground, they are sent to the 'red room' at lunchtime, which is adjacent to the dining hall. Pupils are well supervised while they are there. Pupils say these sanctions help them to make the right choices. The academy's records indicate sanctions are assisting in reducing the number of exclusions. One parent commented, 'This is the best this school has ever been.'

Leaders and staff have worked closely with pupils to successfully promote positive attitudes to learning. Pupils take care in the presentation of their work and wear their school uniform with pride. They are eager to receive praise and rewards, such as a special mention in reward assemblies attended by parents. The balance of rewards and sanctions motivates pupils to give of their best. It deters most pupils from adopting behaviours that disrupt the learning of themselves and others. As a result, in the majority of lessons pupils are engaged and want to learn. In some lessons teachers are using highly effective approaches which have enhanced pupils' desire to learn and achieve. For example, in a Year 6 numeracy lesson the teacher asked pupils to analyse and discuss which attitudes and behaviours had best helped them to complete a mathematical investigation. Following their discussion, pupils began to see the impact that positive attitudes can have on their capacity to succeed. However, occasionally teachers are not planning work that is challenging enough to hold pupils' attention. When this happens, pupils' attitudes to learning can dip and their progress slows.

The academy's work to harness the support of parents in the promotion of good behaviour has been extensive. The family support worker welcomes parents at the

gate every morning and provides further support upon request. Parents recognise the benefits of this easy access to extra help. Leaders are not formally evaluating how effectively they have worked with parents so they can plan next steps that have further impact. As a result, although more parents are supportive of the academy's efforts, some are not yet working closely enough with the academy in its promotion of positive conduct.

Leaders and staff, including teaching assistants, are extremely knowledgeable about the needs of individual pupils. They use their knowledge to evaluate whether planned support, including that provided by external agencies, is working. This includes introducing pets that need daily attention to improve pupils' attendance and creating the 'green room', where targeted pupils can play quietly during break and lunchtime. Leaders, including governors, make regular visits to lessons to check whether particular pupils are making good progress. Consequently, there have been some significant improvements in the behaviour and attendance of individual pupils who have complex needs. However, leaders are not yet making full use of all the information they gather to evaluate the impact of what they do across the academy. They are not yet consistently using information about incidents of low-level disruption to evaluate how effectively teachers are managing pupils' behaviour in lessons.

Priorities for further improvement

- Make better use of all of the information available to build a sharper picture of the impact of actions taken.
- Use your evaluations to hold teachers to account for how they manage pupils' behaviour and develop pupils' positive attitudes to learning.
- Use information gathered to plan astute next steps that further improve parents' contributions to promoting positive conduct.
- Carefully monitor the behaviour of pupils at the change-over of lessons in the corridors which link different areas of the academy.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services, 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

Sarah Hubbard
Her Majesty's Inspector