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26 March 2015

Mrs P Houghton
Headteacher
Thorpe Hall Primary School
Hale End Road
Walthamstow
E17 4DP

Dear Mrs Houghton

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Thorpe Hall Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 24 March 2015, 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 and safety of pupils at the school.

Evidence

During the inspection I considered a range of evidence including:

- observations of pupils' behaviour throughout the day, including at the start of the day, break time and lunch time
- observations of pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning in lessons
- discussions with pupils about their views and experiences
- documentary evidence about behaviour, safety and attendance
- discussions with parents, school leaders, staff and the chair of governors about how the school manages behaviour, safety and attendance

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

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

Context

Thorpe Hall School is a much larger than average sized primary school. It currently has 540 pupils on roll. A planned increase in its size is underway until it reaches a full capacity of 700 pupils. A substantial building project has been completed to accommodate this expansion. The majority of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and nearly a half speak English as an additional language. Approximately one third of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium grant. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average. There is a much higher than average number of pupils with a statement of special educational need.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Since the previous inspection in November 2011 pupils' behaviour has declined. Leaders and governors do not systematically evaluate pupils' behaviour and safety. They lack an accurate understanding of the school's strengths, its weaknesses or the effectiveness of some strategies used to address behaviour concerns.

I observed inconsistent management of pupils' behaviour in lessons and during break times. This variation in practice was reflected in the mixed responses I received from parents and pupils. Whilst many commented positively about the school's work, others expressed negative views about playtimes, bullying and the management of a small number of pupils with challenging behaviour.

Pupils' arrival to school at the start of the day is efficient and safe. They are welcomed and supervised by staff onto the premises and into class in an orderly manner. This ensures they are prompt and ready to learn. Pupils who arrive late report to a member of staff in the reception area. Senior staff monitor lateness records and appropriate action is taken to improve poor punctuality.

In most classes visited during inspection, adults managed pupils' behaviour and attitudes effectively so they were engaged in their learning and supported to achieve well in their work. Pupils listened respectfully to adults and to each other and responded quickly to instructions. Children in a reception class showed positive social skills and sustained concentration in different activities. In Key Stage 2 a teacher used a 'no hands up rule' preferring instead to select individuals to answer a question, consequently all pupils listened attentively. In contrast pupils in a minority of classes displayed poor attitudes; they were disaffected and made little attempt to work. In one class a pupil asked for help but this was ignored and so she called out repeatedly which disturbed others on nearby tables. In two classes, some pupils' books were not marked, handwriting and presentation was scruffy because neither adults nor pupils took responsibility for improvement.

Pupils spoke confidently to me about the school's behaviour policy. They understand the green, amber and red steps to monitor class behaviour. They believe this system

is fair and that 'time out' during play time, as a detention, helps most of them to think about their actions. Pupils however felt that this strategy did not work for everyone. One pupil commented, 'Some are beyond time out, they don't care, they

go there again and again and nothing changes.' My analysis of school records confirms this to be the case; a minority of pupils behave poorly too frequently. Leaders do not systematically analyse behaviour records to check for trends or patterns. Equally, they do not evaluate the impact of new strategies to see whether or not these reduce the frequency of negative incidents.

The management of behaviour at break and lunchtimes is not good. Accident records show too many children visit the first aid room to receive treatment for cuts and bruises or to talk quietly to an adult. This is because the playground is too boisterous. I observed rough play and name calling particularly by older children. The ball court was overcrowded leading to pupils' conflicts about space and goals. Most adult supervisors did not scan the playground and intervene appropriately to prevent an escalation of disagreements. Adults did not lead playground games however older pupils recruited as 'games makers' took their responsibility seriously. They proudly wore special hats and expertly engaged children in different games.

Attendance has improved steadily in the last three years. It is 96.2% since September 2014. Leaders do not authorise holidays in term time, a high number of financial penalties are sanctioned. Persistent absence has fallen considerably but it remains above average. The attendance for pupils who are disabled or those who have special educational needs, however, is not as regular as others. Staff are knowledgeable about individual circumstances and work successfully with families to encourage better attendance. Fixed term exclusions have increased for pupils with complex needs. Leaders work very hard to include pupils with challenging behaviour but some parents and pupils express concern about the impact this has on the learning and safety of others.

Governors do not have a good understanding of behaviour, attendance and safety in the school. They do not visit the school to check its work. The headteacher provides information about exclusions, attendance and racial incidents but governors do not hold leaders to account for addressing this evidence within an agreed timescale.

Priorities for further improvement

- Implement a sharply focused strategic plan to monitor, evaluate and improve the behaviour, attendance and safety for pupils in school
- Strengthen governors' role in evaluating pupils' behaviour, safety and attitudes
- Review the organisation of playtimes and ensure supervisory staff adhere to expectations about how to manage pupils' behaviour and play.

- Improve the attendance for pupils who have special educational needs so they are at least in line with the national average

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Waltham Forest, to the Secretary of State for Education and the Chair of the Governing Body. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ann Debono
Her Majesty's Inspector