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30 March 2015

Mr Robert Ellis
Executive Headteacher
Deptford Green School
Edward Street
New Cross
London, SE14 6AN

Dear Mr Ellis

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Deptford Green School

Following my visit to your school on 25 March 2015 with Mel Rose, Her Majesty's Inspector, 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 in light of the judgment given to behaviour and safety in the school during its most recent inspection. The Chief Inspector was concerned to see how rapidly the school is improving its work in this regard.

Evidence

Inspectors considered evidence including:

- observations of students' behaviour and their attitudes to learning in lessons and house assembly
- observations of students' behaviour throughout the day, including discussions with them
- documentary evidence
- 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 consistently promote positive attitudes to learning.

Context

Deptford Green School is a smaller than average-size secondary school. It currently has 842 students on roll and has recently closed its very small sixth form. The number of students supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for disadvantaged students and those looked after by their local authority) is higher than is the case nationally. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is above average. Additional, specialist support for many of these students is provided through a local authority resourced unit. This unit is managed by the school's inclusion staff team. The large majority of students are from minority ethnic heritages and the number who speak English as an additional language is much higher than that seen nationally. A small group of students study vocational courses at nearby Lewisham Southwark College. The school has much higher than average levels of student mobility. For example, between September 2014 and March 2015, 45 students left the school and 57 arrived.

Behaviour and safety of students

Students' arrival to the school at the beginning of the day is generally ordered, well-disciplined and calm. Supervision around the school entrance is efficient and those staff on duty are proactive in welcoming students into the school. In the few examples where arrival into school was not as speedy as it might have been, those students responded well to the firm cajoling of the senior leader on duty. Arrangements for the management of the small number of students who were late to school were effective and used consistently. Reasons for lateness are carefully checked and then followed up by contact with parents or carers. A number of appropriate sanctions are used with those students who are late without a valid reason.

Students' conduct around the school campus is variable. In most cases, they move around the site calmly, with purpose, and in a mature, responsible and friendly manner. The very well-designed school campus is bright, clean and welcoming and students, in the main, respect the environment. Students love their new school and describe it as a 'massive' improvement on their previous site. The majority of students make good use of the indoor and outdoor spaces at all times of the day and these areas are graffiti free. During break and lunchtimes, the facilities provided for students, including a number of sports, clubs and societies, are well used and much appreciated by the students.

In contrast to this generally positive picture, on occasion, students meander to their lessons and are not always challenged when doing so by staff. Levels of litter and lunchtime detritus are unacceptable because students do not routinely tidy away after they have eaten and not all staff enforce the expectation for them to do so. There is a considerable staff presence around the site at all times of day and inspectors witnessed a number of staff encouraging good behaviour from students in line with the school's behaviour policy. Unfortunately, this is not consistently applied

by all staff. Consequently, punctuality to lessons and the management of litter across the campus are not as good as they should be.

Students wear their uniform with varying degrees of smartness. In the very best cases, they look business-like, tidy, fit for study and conform to the school's uniform policy. However, too many students do not adhere to the rules. Significant numbers of girls do not wear their skirts at knee length; large numbers of boys and girls ignore the 'eight stripes' rule for their ties; many students have jacket lapels covered in badges which are not official school badges; significant numbers infringe clear school rules over jewellery; and too many girls wear excessive make up and garish nail polish. This mixed picture is rooted in an unclear uniform policy which is then implemented inconsistently by staff.

The majority of lessons seen were calm and orderly and characterised by respectful, courteous relationships. Students were usually attentive, generally responsive and embraced well-planned activities with enthusiasm. In one Year 7 French lesson, effective planning by a skilled teacher resulted in lively engagement from all students, despite the lesson being conducted almost entirely in French. Similarly in a Year 9 English lesson, the very effective planning and behaviour management by the teacher resulted in a calm, orderly lesson in which students made clear progress. However, in a number of other cases, staff did not demand enough of their students. The school's very clear work presentation policy is not enforced consistently – too many books have poorly presented work which goes unchallenged. Similarly, while many teachers insisted upon the highest standards of behaviour in lessons, not all did. Calling out was not always challenged and a number of teachers tried to talk above low-level chatter rather than insisting upon silence when needed.

Students who spoke to inspectors were confident, articulate and well mannered. They were very positive about improvements in behaviour since the last inspection. They praised the staff for their improving management of behaviour across the school and said they felt safe and cared for. Inspectors did find some inconsistency in students' understanding of the detail of the school's behaviour and rewards systems. Students also felt that the staff's use of the behaviour policy was variable. Several students stated 'It depends which teacher you have' in conversations with inspectors concerning the use of the policy. However, they stated firmly that incidents of very poor behaviour were uncommon, that bullying was extremely rare and never tolerated in the school and that the school celebrated its diversity 'all the time'. Students were keen to praise the quality of support and care across the school, which one Year 11 student described as 'wonderful', having been helped to manage difficulties lower down in the school. They were also excited by new developments in student leadership, where opportunities for taking significant responsibility across the school were 'better than before'.

The school's behaviour policy sets out clear systems of reward and sanction. It has an appropriate focus upon encouraging good or better behaviour while making very clear the school's expectations and the consequences of persistent poor behaviour.

Regular meetings take place between key staff, including form tutors, support staff, house leaders, senior managers and a wide range of other key professionals, including educational psychologists and counsellors. Such meetings result in swift and effective interventions to improve students' behaviour when issues are identified.

Rates of exclusion in the school in the past have been very high and more students are still excluded than is seen nationally. In the immediate past, this has been especially so with some vulnerable groups, including the disadvantaged, the disabled and those with special educational needs. The school has historically excluded boys at double the rate for girls. As a consequence of this record and the findings of the last inspection, leaders undertook a review of inclusion arrangements across the school. This review has had a significant impact in the school to date. The relocation of the 'Lifeboat' internal exclusion facility combined with the whole school review has resulted, for example, in a significant reduction in the number of internal exclusions in Key Stage 3. Similarly, rates of external exclusion have fallen significantly since the last inspection. Disabled students and those with special educational needs are now much less likely to be excluded. This is the direct result of a more imaginative approach in creating better educational programmes for these vulnerable young people. It is resulting in rapid improvement.

Leaders' tenacious focus on improving attendance is reaping benefits. Form tutors, house leaders and senior managers thoroughly review attendance information in weekly meetings. In these meetings, individual cases are discussed and support and help for students and their families, where needed, is swiftly provided. Attendance information is also analysed at a more strategic level and, as a result, leaders and governors are now fully aware of the patterns of attendance with specific groups of students. Leaders acknowledge the school's attendance policy could be more precise in terms of its attendance targets, mirroring the ambitious 98% minimum target within the students' planner and the school's newsletters, for example. The result of this tenacity is impressive with attendance rates rising, in some cases rapidly, in all student groups. This impact is recognised by the local authority who have deemed the school's current success in dealing with persistent absence rates as the most improved in the borough.

Priorities for further improvement

- Leaders and governors should:
 - revise the school's policies for behaviour, attendance and punctuality and uniform and equipment so that they identify the highest of expectations more precisely
 - ensure that all staff consistently use these revised policies
 - revise arrangements for the management of break and lunchtime so that very little litter is generated and, when it is, that it is dealt with swiftly by students and staff.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Lewisham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Debbie Clinton
Her Majesty's Inspector