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8 June 2015

Miss Rosemary Godwin
Headteacher
Stanbridge Lower School
Tilsworth Road
Stanbridge
Leighton Buzzard
LU7 9HY

Dear Miss Godwin

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Stanbridge Lower School

Following my visit to your school on 8 June 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

I considered evidence including:

- observations of pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning in lessons
- observations of pupils' behaviour throughout the day, including discussion with pupils
- 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 maintain the high standards of behaviour and attitudes identified at the school's previous inspection.

Context

Stanbridge Lower School is smaller than average of its type with 90 pupils on roll. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding (additional funding provided for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in

care of the local authority) is well above average. Currently a half of the pupils come from families that are part of the local traveller community. High numbers of these pupils move in and out of the school on a regular basis. The remaining pupils are predominately of white British origin. The number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is very small. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is significantly higher than the national average. The number of pupil supported by a statement of educational need is also above average. There is a pre-school facility for children of nursery age within the school.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour policy provides detailed guidance to all staff in how positive behaviour should be celebrated and what to do if behaviour is unacceptable. My observations during the inspection confirm that staff are consistent in their application of this policy both in class and around the school. You maintain detailed records of any unacceptable or aggressive behaviour by pupils. My scrutiny of these records and discussion with pupils indicates that pupils behave well but sometimes a small minority do not. Your records show that any unacceptable behaviour is dealt with swiftly and parents are fully informed about any course of action taken. It is clear that fixed-term exclusions are used as a last resort with a reduction in number for this academic year. Discussions with a number of parents and carers during the inspection indicate that they have few concerns about behaviour within the school and that if there is any unacceptable or challenging behaviour, it is managed well by yourself and other staff.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage respond well to well-planned opportunities for them to develop their personal and social skills. Reception children happily share play equipment while taking part in a counting game in the outdoor area. They listen carefully to adults in small group activities inside the classroom. Children in the pre-school class happily share the equipment in the outdoor play area.

Pupils in Years 1 to 4 are keen to learn and concentrate on their work. For instance, older pupils in Year 4 work well with a partner to accurately draw and calculate the perimeter of a rectangle in a mathematics lesson and those in Year 2 respond well to their teacher in a lesson to develop their spelling skills. Scrutiny of the English and mathematics books confirms that pupils try hard to write neatly and by the time they are in Year 4, all pupils write in a neat cursive style. Work in their mathematics books is well presented. There is growing evidence that the newly introduced marking system in Year 4 is encouraging these pupils to be more reflective about their own work.

Pupils respond very well to the high levels of care and support provided by all the staff. You have established a very inclusive climate for learning and development within the school where pupils, parents and carers feel valued. Discussions with parents from all sections of the school community confirm this to be so. As a result, positive relationships are clearly evident between staff, parents and pupils. Those pupils from the traveller community feel positive about their school experiences. For example, they talk with knowledge and enthusiasm about painting pictures in the

style of Monet and learning about the Second World War. They say that the level of care they receive from staff when they find work difficult, on return to school after a period away, helps them to quickly make up the gaps in their learning.

All pupils are polite and friendly towards visitors and keen to talk about their school experiences. Pupils move sensibly in an orderly way around the school between the classrooms under the guidance of staff. Your well-structured plan for assemblies provides good opportunities for the development of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It effectively supports the pupils' personal and social development while establishing shared values across the school community. As a result, those pupils from the traveller community who return to the school after periods of being away, are quickly re-integrated back into class.

Pupils from all classes eat together sensibly and calmly in the dining hall. They queue patiently waiting to get their meal and respond well to lunchtime staff during the mealtime. Many pupils say that they enjoy eating the freshly cooked food and look forward to the healthy choices provided each week. This dining experience provides good opportunities for all pupils to generate a healthy approach to eating and a strong sense of community during lunchtime. Playtimes are well supervised by staff and pupils play with others sensibly on and around the wide range of apparatus and play surfaces. No aggressive behaviour was observed at playtimes during the inspection.

Since the last inspection, you have continued to work closely with local authority staff and those from other agencies to minimise the impact of the very high numbers of pupils' whose attendance is below the 85% threshold. This is reflected in an improving trend for the last two academic years since the previous inspection. However, the increase in numbers of pupils from the traveller community this academic year has led to a reversal in this improvement. The appointment of a family liaison officer to work specifically with these families has gone some way towards improving the attendance of these pupils. She has established positive links with these parents who are becoming more aware of the benefits that good attendance has on the progress their children make at school.

Your regular meetings with the family liaison officer provide the opportunity to monitor any specific issues related to poor attendance and identify further action such as issuing a formal penalty notice to parents of which there was one last year. Unexplained absences are followed up quickly by telephone. The family liaison officer monitors pupil punctuality effectively every morning with a friendly greeting at the school gate. Very few pupils arrived late at the school on the day of the inspection. However, data related to the attendance of pupils from the traveller community is not updated and used quickly enough to re-arrange teaching groups and minimise the impact of this authorised absence on pupil achievement.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that data related to attendance is used as quickly as possible to minimise the impact of pupil mobility on achievement.

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

Philip Mann
Her Majesty's Inspector