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8 December 2015

Ms Julie McDowell
Headteacher
West Pelton Primary School
Twizell Lane
West Pelton
Stanley
County Durham
DH9 6SQ

Dear Ms McDowell

No formal designation monitoring inspection of West Pelton Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 24 November 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 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about behaviour at the school.

Evidence

Inspectors 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

West Pelton is a much smaller than average-sized primary school, although the number on roll has increased since the last inspection to 69. Virtually all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority) is well above average. The proportion of disabled pupils or pupils with special educational needs, who are provided with additional support, is also above average. The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is similar to that found nationally. Since the last inspection, there have been no changes in staffing.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning were judged to be good at the time of the last inspection and remain so. A calm, friendly atmosphere welcomes parents, pupils and visitors alike. Pupils behave well in lessons, at social times, as they move around the school and when they start and end their school day. They enter the school grounds in a calm and friendly manner, well dressed in their uniforms. Pupils greet the headteacher, who stands near the gate to welcome them, politely and happily. Pupils who come to school early to go to the breakfast club sit and share their meal with their friends sensibly. They move to the outside yard for a short period before lessons start to meet and play with more friends. Throughout this time, they behave well and are supervised discreetly by staff.

Pupils take their coats off speedily and move straight into lessons. They listen carefully to teachers' instructions and settle down to their tasks quickly. For example, in the upper class, pupils got their reading books out without prompting and silently read them while waiting for the attendance register to be completed. They remained calm and displayed positive attitudes when they got ready to go to their exciting theatre visit that morning. In the afternoon, Reception and Year 1 class pupils settled quickly to hear an interesting story, and then moved on seamlessly to the wide range of activities on offer. Pupils' attitudes to learning in lessons are usually good. Pupils report that there are very few occasions when pupils disrupt the learning of others. Pupils were seen to be attentive, diligent and cooperative in their lessons. They worked equally well in groups or pairs or on their own.

Lunchtime in the hall is a sociable occasion where pupils chat and eat. Some pupils say it gets a bit noisy, but staff are at hand to make sure pupils get along well and to give a gentle reminder when things get a little too loud. Pupils say that behaviour at lunchtimes is usually good and appreciate the prefects and adults who are around to keep an eye on them and help them if they are feeling a bit down. They do report that incidents occasionally arise from either football activities or the exuberant behaviour of others. However, they say that such incidents are quickly sorted out. Prefects report positively about how they, or staff, help to minimise concerns and respond quickly to any incidents of unruly or unkind behaviour.

Pupils report enthusiastically that staff take good care of them. They say that they particularly value the 'Share Your Feelings Box' where they can drop in a note about

any concern that crops up. Pupils know the box will be checked regularly and actions are taken the very next day 'in the best way to help the pupil'. Also, they value highly the work of the learning support assistant who they feel is always on hand to help them when they are having a difficult moment.

The school's safeguarding arrangements are effective. They are robust and fully in line with the most recent Department for Education's statutory guidance. Pupils say that staff keep them very safe, and pupils are well taught about understanding the different types of bullying and what to do if they have concerns. They report that incidents are rare and are well tackled. Assemblies, activities during anti-bullying week, and the school's curriculum promote pupils' understanding well. A range of work is undertaken to help pupils to understand online bullying risks. This includes sessions for parents to help raise their awareness of risks to their children's safety from modern technology and mobile phones.

Any racist, homophobic or bullying incidents are identified, recorded, tackled and tracked robustly. Governors receive information about such incidents in the termly headteacher's report. Few incidents occur from one term to the next.

The headteacher also keeps meticulous records of instances of general misbehaviour, including the actions taken by staff. Recent improvements to the records mean that now staff identify any learning from the incidents and how issues could be followed up at a whole-school level through an assembly or lesson time. Governors do not receive reports on this information, or trends over time. Consequently, they do not know if incidents are reducing as a result of the work the school is doing to ensure pupils' behaviour remains good.

Pupils say that teachers are fair, friendly and firm; pupils have a good understanding of the rewards and consequences in the school's behaviour policy. Pupils report also that teachers are consistent in their approach to managing behaviour in school. They particularly like the celebration assemblies that let everyone know about their good work, attitudes or attendance, and 'golden time' at the end of the week where they can choose activities for themselves when they have done well.

Despite such good work, until summer 2015, the proportion of pupils subject to a temporary exclusion remained above average. Closer partnership working with parents and other agencies, when required, is enabling the small number of pupils at risk of exclusion to remain in school and successfully continue with their learning. No pupils have been excluded temporarily this term. Staff have been trained to understand and then support pupils with complex needs, including pupils with an autistic spectrum diagnosis. This is helping the staff to develop strategies to support pupils in class and remove barriers to their learning.

Attendance rates have improved since the last inspection and have been broadly average for the past two years. Improved strategies have been developed to make sure attendance improves further. This includes closer working with families whose children are at risk of not attending and support to families facing significant challenges in their lives. Strong partnership working between the school's parent support adviser and Durham County Council's education welfare officer is helping to

identify families earlier and then take action sooner. This is starting to make inroads into reducing the higher than average proportion of pupils regularly absent.

Staff report that the headteacher has high expectations of behaviour and is out and about regularly to model her expectations and to support staff in ensuring a consistent approach in implementing the school's detailed behaviour policy and anti-bullying strategy. There is an expectation of a culture of care and respect for all in the school and that staff model the behaviours that they expect of pupils. Staff speak of how this approach is checked in lesson observations carried out by leaders, and during staff meetings, and how they are supported well to develop strategies should they face difficulties.

Parents who spoke to the inspector are overwhelmingly positive about the behaviour, safety and care in the school. Parents report that behaviour is well managed and the few incidents they hear about are quickly sorted out. They say that they rarely hear their children talk about bullying and so they are sure incidents must be very rare. The school's recent parent survey confirms the highly positive views held by the parents during the inspection. Too few parents responded to Ofsted's online Parent View survey to be able to take these views into account.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that governors receive regular information about the number and types of incidents of misbehaviour that are recorded in school so they can check the impact of the behaviour policy on pupils' attitudes and behaviour over time.

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

Yours sincerely

Margaret Farrow
Her Majesty's Inspector