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9 December 2015

Mr Richard Brown
Executive Headteacher
The Urswick School
Paragon Road
Hackney
London
E9 6NR

Dear Mr Brown

No formal designation monitoring inspection of The Urswick School

Following my visit with Mary Hinds, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 5 November 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 focused on pupils' behaviour and the leadership and management of the behaviour of pupils at the school.

Evidence

Inspectors met with you and other senior leaders, a representative from the local authority and a governor. Inspectors accompanied you on a tour of the school site and observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and throughout the day. They met with groups of pupils and staff. They scrutinised documents and minutes of governing body meetings, and considered responses to the school's own recent survey of parental views. Inspectors paid particular attention to the school's records relating to fixed-term and permanent exclusions.

Having considered 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

The Urswick School is a smaller than average-sized, voluntary-aided Church of England secondary school. It has 842 pupils on roll, of whom 88 attend the sixth form. The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding and those from minority ethnic groups is significantly higher than average. The proportions of pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs are also significantly above average. Staff turnover is low.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in relation to the behaviour of pupils at the school

Your robust leadership of the school focuses relentlessly on promoting positive outcomes for pupils. You are unequivocal in your insistence on high standards of pupil behaviour. Staff strongly agree with this approach and ensure that the school's clear behaviour management systems are implemented consistently and effectively. They know the pupils very well and supervise pupils closely at break- and lunchtimes. As a result, pupils behave extremely well in lessons and around the school. Pupils show respect for the school site, which is tidy and litter free. Pupils welcome visitors politely and respectfully. They are proud of their school and appreciate the opportunities it offers them.

Members of the school community support your dynamic leadership enthusiastically. They share your vision of 'Believe and Achieve', which permeates the school. Senior leaders are committed, focused and well organised. Pupils greatly appreciate the provision of free lunches for all pupils. The staff 'walkabout mentors' contribute to a calm and orderly school and ensure that pupils are punctual to lessons. They are on hand to provide supportive and sensitive supervision for pupils when required. These combined aspects create a very strong sense of community.

Pupils of all ages are consistently positive when speaking about their school. They told inspectors that 'it's a calm atmosphere to work in', 'it's a great school' and 'it's really lovely'. They would recommend the school unreservedly to prospective parents. Pupils speak about 'forming bonds' with their tutors who 'support you in everything you do'. Pupils show respect to each other, staff and visitors. Collectively, this demonstrates the impact of leadership and management in creating a welcoming yet positively challenging school in which pupils behave well and thrive. Pupils' attendance is above national averages because pupils enjoy coming to school.

Leaders deal swiftly and effectively with instances of behaviour that fall short of the standards expected. You have a clear policy of using fixed-term exclusions as a sanction for poor behaviour and you implement it consistently. Pupils fully understand the policy and report that they 'know what is expected' of them. Pupils realise they are 'missing out' if they are excluded, which demonstrates their commitment to being at school.

You communicate with the parents of excluded pupils very clearly and reintegrate pupils well after a fixed-term exclusion. Staff implement pastoral support plans to monitor pupils' progress against their targets effectively. These plans involve pupils and parents, both of whose views are included, which reduces the likelihood of future exclusion. A very large majority of parents strongly support the school's approach to managing pupils' behaviour, as demonstrated by their consistently positive responses to the school's regular parental surveys. Although governors review annual exclusion figures, it is unclear to what extent they support or challenge school leaders in this respect because the minutes of governing body meetings lack detail.

The school has an imaginative and motivational rewards system that works alongside the system of sanctions to encourage positive behaviour. For example, pupils gain credits for positive contributions in lessons and for communicating effectively with others, which they collect towards certificates and vouchers. Pupils speak highly about the rewards system because it motivates them to attend and participate fully in school. As a result, pupils are punctual to lessons.

Pupils feel safe at the school because leaders insist on a culture of tolerance and understanding. Pupils are knowledgeable about, and respect, difference. For example, multiple signs around the school declare that 'this is a safe zone for lesbian, bisexual, transgender and gay people' and that 'homophobic attitudes are not tolerated and will be challenged'. All staff have received recent training on female genital mutilation and child protection. The school has a very clear anti-bullying policy which is implemented effectively. Pupils report that bullying is not tolerated and that the few instances that occur are dealt with swiftly and sensitively by members of staff. Staff invest significant time and effort into nurturing and promoting the well-being of all pupils. As a result, pupils feel valued and supported.

External support

The school receives effective external support from the local authority, Hackney Learning Trust. You are the executive headteacher of a local authority pupil referral unit. You work increasingly closely, and successfully, with other schools in the area to provide support for vulnerable young people in the local community.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that leaders provide governors with a full analysis of information relating to exclusions so that governors can robustly hold you to account for this aspect of the leadership and management of the behaviour of pupils at the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Vanessa Ward

Her Majesty's Inspector

cc Mr Roger Pryce, Chair of the Governing Body
 Mr Martin Buck, Head of Secondary School Improvement, Hackney
 Learning Trust
 Ms Liz Wolverson, Director of Education, London Diocesan Board for
 Schools