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Mr Dan Thomas
Headteacher
Wheelock Primary School
Crewe Road
Wheelock
Sandbach
Cheshire
CW11 3RT

Dear Mr Thomas

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Wheelock Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 2 March 2016, 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 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about the behaviour and welfare of pupils at the school.

Evidence

I scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. I met with you and your acting deputy headteacher, some parents and staff. I visited classrooms to see the school at work and observed pupils' conduct during break and lunchtimes. I also observed pupils arriving and exiting the school at the start and end of the school day, including watching the procedures surrounding the use of the school bus. I took account of the responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View, the school's own survey of parents' opinions and evidence of social media activities. I also scrutinised other documents relating to attendance and the behaviour and welfare of pupils.

Having considered 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

You took over as interim executive headteacher of Wheelock Primary in September 2015. Prior to your appointment, the school was led by another interim headteacher for the summer term following the long-term absence of the substantive headteacher. The school's assistant headteacher has acted as deputy headteacher since Easter 2015. The school is well on the way to becoming an academy on 1 April 2016. Wheelock Primary is an average-sized primary school. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups and pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than that found nationally. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is lower than that found nationally, while the proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is twice the national average. A similar proportion of pupils leave or join the school at different times of the year to that found in other schools across the country. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is less than half the national average. Pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.

Leadership and management of behaviour and welfare

In 2015, pupils' attendance was lower than the national average for primary schools. Leaders have taken effective action to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance and have implemented appropriate support for pupils and parents from school and external agencies. Consequently, current attendance in school is much better and higher than the national average in 2015.

Observations at the beginning of the day show that nearly all pupils arrive on time and in an orderly manner. They behave sensibly as they enter the school and staff, including senior leaders, are available to meet pupils and parents. Procedures are in place that ensure traffic movement in the school's car park is minimised during these busy times and particularly for the arrival of the school bus. This calm behaviour is repeated at the end of the school day where again teachers are available to discuss any concerns with parents.

You have ensured that the school has strong and effective procedures in place to manage the safe use of the school bus. These procedures are communicated to parents and are followed assiduously by the school. Appropriate levels of supervision ensure pupils' safe transit from school to the bus and the correct use of seatbelts prior to departure. During the loading of the bus, closure of the school's car park restricts traffic movement and further ensures pupils' safety. Governors are aware that a small number of parents have concerns over the use of the bus and have implemented a full review of systems and procedures to identify any further actions that may be necessary.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons is exemplary. Pupils arrive punctually and settle quickly to their tasks with little or no fuss. Pupils are enthusiastic learners who contribute willingly and sensibly to class discussions. This was seen in Reception where children were keen and confident to question visiting fire officers about their work and equipment. Pupils often collaborate maturely during tasks because of the well-established routines that are consistently applied by teachers and teaching assistants across the school. They show pride in their work, eagerly articulating what they have done and what they are learning. The school has a detailed behaviour policy which is consistently applied by teachers and other adults across the school; consequently, pupils are fully aware of what is expected of them. Disruption or distraction from learning is rare but, when it does occur, it is dealt with quickly and effectively by teachers. Pupils enjoy the rewards systems in school, particularly the certificates linked to the school's ethos and the house point system trophy.

Pupils move about the school calmly and quietly; they show respect for each other and adults. Adults model and reciprocate this respect to pupils and, as a result, relationships between staff and pupils are strongly positive across the school. Pupils are polite to each other and to visitors. For example, pupils were eager to hold doors open for me and politely enquired whether I was having a pleasant visit.

Displays around the school are bright, up to date and well maintained. They emphasise the school's positive approach to learning, celebrating pupils' work and highlighting key aspects of the school's life. The school has a well-embedded system for focusing on core values that contribute to its ethos. An interesting approach had been developed and implemented by the acting deputy headteacher which has a positive impact on behaviour and learning. This system focuses on key themes: community, challenge, individuality and creativity. A different animal is used to represent each aspect. Pupils develop a good understanding of the school's ethos and model it through their behaviour and attitudes to learning because teachers weave each aspect into the curriculum as part of a weekly focus. As a result, it is common to hear pupils referring to the ethos animals to describe particular attributes of their own behaviours, for example saying that they have been working like an ant, the animal that represents challenge, to succeed in their lessons.

Pupils say that they feel very safe in school. They have an accurate understanding of what makes an unsafe situation and are able to talk knowledgeably about how to keep safe in the community and while they are online because of the quality of teaching they have received. Pupils are aware of the different types of bullying, including homophobic and online bullying, though a small number find it more difficult to distinguish between bullying and day-to-day falling out with friends. Pupils say that there was some bullying in the past in school but now incidents are rare and they are confident staff will deal effectively with them.

I met with a number of parents at the start and end of the school day. All parents I spoke with were very happy with their experiences of school. They stated they find

you and your staff easy to approach and willing to listen to and address any concerns they may have. Many parents identified that pupils' behaviour has improved since September 2015. Parents feel better informed because of the improvements to communications that you and your predecessor brought about. This was by increasing opportunities for parents to see children at work and the effective use of a weekly newsletter, emails and electronic texts. A small number of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, have not yet recognised the improvements you and your staff have made to the school. This is not representative of the evidence I found in school nor that presented by a larger sample of parents who responded to the school's own recent paper-based questionnaire.

Governors have ensured that the school's safeguarding arrangements continue to be effective.

External support

The school draws well upon local partners to support its safety and behaviour curriculum. Visits from local fire service and police officers ensure pupils know how to keep safe and develop their understanding of the rule of law.

Governors and school leaders use the services of the local authority effectively to provide additional support for pupils in need and to ensure that the school remains a safe environment in which to learn.

Priorities for further improvement

- Continue the effective work to promote the school's anti-bullying culture.
- Implement any actions arising from the governors' review of procedures relating to the use of the school bus.
- Continue to improve communication with parents so that they better understand the work of the school.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Cheshire East Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Nixon
Her Majesty's Inspector