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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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23 March 2016

Mrs Julie Housden
Headteacher
Derwent Community School
St Mark's Road
Derby
DE21 6AL

Dear Mrs Housden

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Derwent Community 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. 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

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 improve behaviour and secure consistently positive attitudes to learning.

Context

The school is an average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium,

which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority, is well above average and accounts for over 60% of the school's population. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is average.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The school's development plans show that improving behaviour and attitudes to learning is a key priority. New initiatives introduced by leaders and managers are having a positive effect on promoting and sustaining good behaviour. All staff, including midday staff, receive training on the consistent management of behaviour. Work with a local primary school and external support is helping to develop good practice. Strong pastoral care provides a good level of support for those pupils who find it difficult to behave well and leaders work hard to ensure that exclusion from school is a last-resort measure. There is a clear focus on raising pupils' aspirations. For example, the 'Aiming High' week increased pupils' understanding of how skills and talents are utilised in the workplace and how hard work is valued. Displays in the school show well-presented folders of work produced by pupils as a result of their experiences during the week. The 'Star of the week' and the 'Writer of the week' awards praise effort and encourage pupils to do their best. Those pupils I spoke to during my visit said they are proud to have their names published in the school's newsletter.

The school day runs smoothly. Staff greet pupils when they arrive and are available to briefly speak to parents. At the end of the day, staff ensure that pupils leave school safely. Newly introduced procedures work well and pupils and parents know what is expected. For example, in the morning, pupils gather quietly before moving to their classrooms. During my visit, all classes settled quickly and there was little time wasting at the start of the day and after playtimes. The atmosphere is calm, with little noise disturbance between classes in the school's open-plan layout.

In lessons, pupils listen attentively to their teachers and to each other. I saw some good examples of pupils sharing their ideas and responding positively to their teachers' questions. Those pupils I spoke to during lessons were clear about their learning and said they like working together. They said they enjoyed learning about other people and places, for example during a topic comparing Derbyshire with Bermuda. Some pupils remarked how they are practising and improving their handwriting. The recently adopted whole-school approach to handwriting is having a positive effect on improving the way pupils present their work.

In the early years, children follow instructions and share resources with each other. They join in with a range of activities, indoors and outside, and respond well to encouragement from staff. During my visit, children showed independence in putting on their coats, and perseverance with what they were doing. In the Nursery, children were determined to finish building a tower taller than themselves while those in the Reception class concentrated on their writing. Children conform to teachers' expectations but, during my visit, not all were fully encouraged to play a part in routinely clearing up after activities.

The staff I spoke to during my visit reported that they feel well supported by leaders and have good opportunities to share expertise in nurturing pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. Lesson observations carried out by leaders celebrate what teachers do well and point out areas for improvement. However, development planning and lesson observations do not have a precise enough focus on evaluating pupils' learning so that teachers are clear about their effectiveness in engaging, challenging and motivating pupils.

Playtimes and lunchtimes are well supervised. Staff are increasingly involving pupils in games and sports activities. This is an area of ongoing development as the school devises more ways to actively engage pupils. During my visit, pupils of all ages practised skipping techniques. They liked having a go at the challenge set by staff and improving upon their personal best. Pupils make good use of the available spaces and play safely. They respond well to instructions and stop promptly when the whistle is blown. During the lunch break, some pupils showed good concentration and independence, for example when working quietly on creative tasks or practising and improving their mathematics on the computers.

In the dining hall, good organisation aids the smooth running of lunchtime arrangements. Kitchen and midday staff are positive about pupils' attitudes towards them. Staff know their roles and make sure pupils are safe. Special attention is paid to children in the early years to allow them enough time to eat. Pupils adhere to the school's systems and respond promptly when called for lunch. They socialise well and the atmosphere in the dining hall is calm. Midday staff report an improvement in behaviour since pupils in Year 6 have been given the responsibility of helping younger pupils during the lunch break. The older pupils I spoke to talked seriously and with maturity about their roles which they said they enjoy.

Pupils know the school's rules and are clear about the sanctions for unacceptable behaviour, which are consistently applied. Pupils say they like the class points system, which leads to the 'Best class for behaviour' award. They describe the 'red card club' which helps them to consider their behaviour. The older pupils agree that getting a red card is not something to be proud of. Pupils of all ages respond to the rules and sanctions but not all are yet at the stage where they are responsible for their own learning behaviours without relying upon teachers to prompt and remind them.

The school's attendance policy clearly links good attendance to good achievement and sets out the school's expectations. Attendance is steadily improving as a result of the school's efforts. Some initiatives are very recent but are already reducing persistent absence. Stringent measures, including home visits, are taking effect and positive relationships with parents are helping them to see the importance of their children being in school regularly and on time. Pupils know the value of good attendance and punctuality. They agree that both aspects are improving and are important to their education. They like getting prizes for being in school every day. There is still some way to go to embed the new systems and raise attendance to average overall but the improvements so far are noticeable.

Staff receive relevant and regular safeguarding training. The pupils I spoke to agreed that the school keeps them safe. They understand the different forms of

bullying and have confidence that any incidents that do arise are dealt with effectively by the school. When I asked them about staying safe when using the internet, pupils outlined the potential risks and how the school helps them to deal with any problems that may occur. The school's single central record is well maintained and meets current statutory safeguarding requirements.

Priorities for further improvement

- Link development plans and lesson observations more closely to learning in order to evaluate how well teachers engage and motivate pupils.
- Involve pupils, including children in the early years, in being more responsible for their actions and learning behaviour.
- Firmly establish the new systems to promote good attendance and punctuality.

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

Vivienne McTiffen
Ofsted Inspector