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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mr Martin Ovenden
Principal
Cecil Jones Academy
Eastern Avenue
Southend-on-Sea
Essex
SS2 4BU

Dear Mr Ovenden

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Cecil Jones Academy

Following my visit to your school on 3 May 2017, 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 of Education, Children's Services and Skills was concerned about behaviour at the school.

Evidence

Inspectors considered evidence that included:

- 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 the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders are taking effective action to improve behaviour and secure positive attitudes to learning.

Context

Cecil Jones Academy opened in September 2015 as part of the Legra Academy Trust. The predecessor school, Cecil Jones College, was judged to require special measures when it was inspected in March 2014.

The school is an average-sized secondary school. Most pupils are from white British backgrounds, with approximately one quarter coming from a range of other ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is well above the national average. No pupils from the school currently access alternative provision. The school continues to face difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff. After an initial period of turbulence in leadership, the school has now secured a permanent principal and senior leadership team. Leaders are supported by the chief executive officer from the trust.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Leaders have brought improvements to the quality of behaviour since the school opened. They have raised expectations about the standards of behaviour from pupils, and are steadily overcoming the low expectations and aspirations of a minority of pupils. However, although there have been improvements in behaviour, there is still much work to do. Senior leaders recognise the challenges that they still face and the importance of gaining much greater consistency in managing pupils' behaviour across the school.

The chief executive officer, the principal and governors lead with a clear vision for the pupils in their community. Where appropriate, the chief executive officer and principal have not shied away from taking tough decisions about staffing to improve the behaviour and welfare provision for pupils. Most notably, the school's reorganisation and new appointments to the senior team, focused solely around the safety, welfare and behaviour of pupils, are creating increasing capacity for improvement.

Leaders have implemented systems that are beginning to embed and lead to improved behaviour and welfare. Leaders support those pupils who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour by using internal procedures, including removal from lessons and detentions, to help them avoid temporary exclusion from school. The number of incidents of poor behaviour are reducing over time, although they are still too high.

Most pupils behave appropriately around the school, respond to staff requests, and are punctual and smartly dressed. Movement around the site between lessons is generally orderly, as are lunch and breaktimes. Areas are well supervised. At times, staff do not consistently reinforce expectations of behaviour when a small minority of pupils act inappropriately.

Most pupils who spoke to inspectors say that they feel safe around the different areas in the school. Pupils say that incidents of bullying do arise. Most pupils who spoke to inspectors said that if they have a problem, there are members of staff whom they would report it to. Some pupils feel that there is inconsistency in how a minority of staff deal with this, and the impact that they have.

Senior leaders are taking action to reduce incidents of bullying. Staff record and act on concerns raised by pupils. Where there are significant incidents, leaders are taking action to support these pupils, and to stop these incidents from happening. Leaders have recently introduced anti-bullying ambassadors and sixth-form buddies who are becoming positive role models in the school and forming positive relationships with other pupils to help them if they have concerns. The school's use of external specialists to support pupils' social, emotional and mental health is used with increasing effectiveness. The use of counsellors and external agencies is providing bespoke support to a number of pupils. Pastoral teams, alongside the designated safeguarding leader, ensure that those pupils who are the most vulnerable receive appropriate and timely referrals to relevant welfare agencies. Leaders are increasingly vigilant to maintain the safety and well-being of these very vulnerable pupils.

Although leaders are increasingly vigilant to ongoing issues of bullying, some parents and pupils have concerns about the inconsistencies in how bullying incidents are dealt with. Inspectors' review of records shows that there is some inconsistency in the routine checks on pupils, after issues have been dealt with, to ensure that there are not any longer-term or continuing concerns. Leaders have already identified this. Ongoing staff training and the reorganisation of the senior team to monitor this more thoroughly are beginning to ensure that this communication and follow-up is more consistent and provides more effective support for pupils over the longer term.

Major incidents of poor behaviour have reduced since the school opened. Leaders have simplified their behaviour system this year to focus more sharply on the management of low-level disruption in lessons. Where teachers reinforce high expectations and follow this policy consistently, pupils are active participants and are engaged in their learning. However, not all teachers make their expectations clear, or act on or challenge low-level poor behaviours. As a result, these behaviours continue, and this limits the learning for those pupils in the lesson. Consequently, conduct in lessons and attitudes to learning remain variable.

In response to this, leaders have analysed their information about behaviour and have sought expert guidance from an external inclusion specialist to run a pilot behaviour management programme in school. This initiative is designed to improve behaviour management in lessons and meet the specific needs of pupils more effectively. The initiative is showing early signs of success in developing pupils' sense of self-worth: most notably, those pupils who took part who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders are currently training more staff and establishing this as a whole-school strategy to improve pupils' engagement and attitudes towards their learning.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the quality of pupils' personal development, behaviour and well-being by:
 - gaining greater consistency in the school's revised procedures for monitoring, supporting and communicating about bullying, so that all pupils and parents can be fully confident in the ability of staff to keep pupils safe and free from bullying
 - ensuring that all staff implement the school's behaviour policy effectively, so that there are consistently high expectations of pupils' behaviour in lessons and around 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 Southend-on-Sea. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kim Pigram
Her Majesty's Inspector