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Mrs Cath Crossley
Witton Middle School
Old Coach Road
Droitwich Spa
Worcestershire
WR9 8BD

Dear Mrs Crossley

No formal designation inspection of Witton Middle School

Following my visit to your school on 17 January 2019 with Josie Leese, Ofsted Inspector, 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, including: school policies, behaviour and safeguarding records, attendance figures, the school's own parent survey, minutes of governors' meetings and the school's strategic plan
- discussions with school leaders, staff, governors, parents and a representative from the local authority.

Having evaluated 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

There are 423 pupils on roll. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average and very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is slightly above the national average. The number of pupils with education, health and care plans is below the national average. Pupils join the school in Year 5 and most leave at the end of Year 7. However, some pupils leave at the end of Year 6 to go into the private sector.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders and staff take their responsibility for keeping children safe very seriously. A culture of nurture and vigilance is evident throughout the school. All policies associated with safeguarding contain the latest guidance and are accessible for parents on the school's website. Safer recruitment checks are robust. The single central record of staff information is well organised and complies with government requirements. The headteacher and safeguarding governor check this record regularly to ensure that only those who have been fully vetted work in the school.

As the designated safeguarding leader, the headteacher is knowledgeable and fully trained in child protection procedures. She is ably supported by three deputy safeguarding leaders who are members of the senior leadership team. Together they provide good training and support for staff. As a result, all staff have a good understanding of what they should do if they have a concern about a pupil. Leaders act swiftly in response to any referrals made by staff and seek appropriate advice and guidance from the local authority. Leaders liaise effectively with other professional agencies to support pupils and families and keep them safe. Records are stored securely and contain a suitable chronology of events depicting causes for concern raised. However, on occasion, through administrative error, the dates on some records do not match those listed in the chronology. Also, the outcome of actions taken are not always clear, for example discussion with social services or closing a record when a child leaves the school.

Pupils feel safe at school because the curriculum, assemblies and visitors teach pupils about different aspects of safety. They have a good knowledge of e-safety and know the dangers associated with using the internet. Leaders regularly share safety messages with parents on the website or through letters. For example, recent correspondence focused on the inappropriate use of social media, so that pupils were monitored carefully at home. Pupils do not use their mobile phones during the school day as these are stored securely in classroom safes. High-risk activities, such as swimming, chemistry and use of outdoor equipment, are fully risk assessed by staff and safety procedures are taught well to pupils to prevent personal injury. For example, SEND pupils demonstrated a very strong

understanding of the dangers involved in using glue-guns and hacksaws when making paddle boats.

Most pupils are confident to report issues to staff. If they are reluctant to do this, 'worry monsters' (soft toys with zipped stomachs), are available in all classrooms for pupils to write messages to. These are then checked by staff and acted upon. However, there are few messages. As one pupil put it, 'That's because we don't have any worries.' Pupils have a very good understanding of bullying and the different forms it can take. They can articulate the difference between someone 'annoying' them or bullying them. Most say bullying is rare but dealt with quickly when it occurs. Name-calling is the most common form experienced. Parents spoken to and the school's survey of parent views show that the large majority feel the school keeps their children safe.

Pupils' behaviour in and around school is good. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and are attentive and well behaved in lessons. They are polite to visitors and move sensibly around the school. Leaders have introduced a new system for managing behaviour. However, the revised policy has not yet been made available for parents on the school's website. The new system is working well and is applied consistently by all staff. A restorative approach is used, where pupils are encouraged to discuss and correct their own behaviour. Pupils have a clear understanding of the sanctions and rewards in place. They particularly like the awards they receive, such as 'Dojos', a headteacher's certificate, or mention in the school newsletter, the 'Witton Warbler', for achieving 'above and beyond' in their work or conduct. These all contribute to the positive behaviour in school. A clear system of sanctions is also well implemented. Verbal warnings, removal to another class or meetings with parents are helping to reduce incidents of inappropriate behaviour.

Leaders monitor behaviour closely and record and track incidents carefully. A 'heat map' demonstrates which pupils are repeat offenders. School records show that the majority of these are in Year 7. However, the number of incidents and repeat offenders is reducing as the new policy becomes embedded. Nevertheless, the number of fixed-term exclusions remains too high and above the national average. Leaders have not identified this aspect as a priority on the school's strategic plan. This limits governors' ability to track and monitor the impact of the behaviour strategies introduced.

'PRIDE' represents the whole-school values. This is an acronym for perseverance, respect, independence, determination and empathy. These values underpin the culture within the school and help strongly promote pupils' personal development and well-being. Displays in classrooms and corridors reinforce these values. Staff manage behaviour well and provide good levels of support in classrooms for pupils with behaviour difficulties. Individual behaviour plans set out clear targets and actions. A nurture facility, the PRIDE room, and 'restorative room' are also available for pupils at lunchtime who need 'time out'. Parent governors also act as positive

role models and mentors for individual pupils. They play cards and talk to pupils to help build their self-esteem. This is having a good impact on the behaviour and attitudes of pupils involved. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. This contributes to good conduct in lessons and constructive attitudes to learning.

Pupils enjoy school and most attend regularly. Attendance overall is in line with the national average. All pupils adhere to the school uniform policy and dress smartly. They show good consideration of others and the school environment. Most parents have positive views of the school. Although there were too few responses on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, to generate any information, parents spoken to and the school's own recent survey shows that most parents feel leaders deal appropriately with behaviour issues. Eighty-five per cent of parents would recommend the school and 94% say their children feel safe. A small minority have concerns about behaviour in Year 7. Parents are complimentary about the regular communication they receive and the effective induction processes in place for Year 5 pupils when they join the school. Parents appreciate the 'open door' policy in operation and say leaders deal with issues well.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that the dates listed on the chronology of safeguarding incidents match the body of evidence on file and the outcome of actions taken is explicit.
- Reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions so that they do not exceed the national average.
- Ensure that the school improvement plan contains measurable criteria for behaviour and exclusions which governors can monitor to determine the success of actions taken.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Worcestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Heather Simpson
Her Majesty's Inspector