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8 March 2016

Mrs Karen McBride
Croxteth Community Primary School
Moss Way
Liverpool
Merseyside
L11 0BP

Dear Mrs McBride

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Croxteth Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 23 February 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 personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils at the school.

Evidence

I met with you, the deputy headteacher, educational welfare officers, groups of pupils, parents, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. I observed pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning in lessons as well as their behaviour throughout the day. I also looked at a range of documentary evidence including attendance information, safeguarding documentation, school policies and records of pupils' behaviour.

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

Since the previous inspection in 2013, five newly qualified teachers have joined the school. The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. Approximately

one out of every two pupils is eligible for pupil premium funding (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are cared for by the local authority). This is about double the national average. Approximately one out of every five pupils has special educational needs or disability. The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Every morning pupils and parents are welcomed with a warm and personal greeting at the school gates from the learning mentor and the school caretaker. This helps to set the tone for the day ahead, helping pupils to arrive at school with a smile on their face and ready to learn. Well-established systems are in place at the start of the day that are understood by all. Pupils walk calmly and sensibly to their classrooms, immediately and without fuss settling to learning activities. In a Key Stage 2 class, for instance, pupils quickly began working together to play mathematical games that they had designed themselves, while in another class I observed pupils reading a wide range of books. As a consequence, no learning time is wasted.

Teachers set high standards and pupils understand what is expected of them. As a consequence, classrooms across the school are calm and purposeful. Pupils are generally keen to learn and do their best. In a Key Stage 1 lesson, for example, pupils responded eagerly to mathematical questions posed by their teacher. Pupils listen attentively to adults and are respectful and polite in their interactions. During an exciting physical education lesson, pupils developed their agility, balance and coordination skills effectively because they listened carefully to the instructions given to them by their sports coach.

Pupils work very well in collaboration with their peers. They listen respectfully to each other's opinions and kindly share resources during lessons. The foundations for this significant strength of the school are laid from the outset in the early years, where the behaviour that I observed was exemplary. A group of children, for example, chatted among themselves about how to share out play-dough fairly, subsequently enabling them all to access their learning activity to make different animal shapes.

Those pupils who spoke to me during my visit stated that they enjoy and look forward to playtimes and lunchtimes. The large and well-equipped playground gives ample opportunity for pupils to find space and activities that they enjoy. Many pupils were observed playing safely and sensibly on the adventure climbing equipment, while other pupils enjoyed sitting and chatting with their friends on the chairs available in the quieter areas. Pupils have a realistic and honest view of behaviour on the playground. They state that pupils are generally well behaved but can 'sometimes make the wrong choices', usually when involved in competitive games of football. However, all pupils whom I spoke to were confident that any incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with appropriately, quickly and effectively by adults.

The school's behaviour policy is applied consistently and fairly across the school. Pupils know, understand and act out the three school rules of 'Take care of yourself, take care of others and take care of our place.' This was particularly evident during morning break when several pupils thoughtfully rushed to the aid of a pupil who had fallen over. Rewards and sanctions are understood by pupils and they say that these are effective in helping them to behave well. Many pupils were eager to explain how motivated they are to earn GRIT points (rewards for good behaviour and attitudes to learning) so that their class might win a trip to ice-skating.

Adults across the school act as strong role models for the pupils of the school. They have cultivated warm and trusting relationships that ensure a culture of mutual respect. Pupils say that the discussions they have with adults in school support them to make the right choices and change their behaviour. Two boys, for example, shared how the support that they have received has helped them to reflect upon and improve the way they behave on the playground.

After the previous inspection in 2013, pupils' attendance fell so that in 2015 it was in the lowest 10% of schools across the country. Furthermore, the proportion of pupils persistently absent from school rose to a level that was over four times that seen nationally. You and governors have taken a range of actions that have begun to address these trends. The use of pupil premium funding to offer a free breakfast club has been particularly successful. Over 3,000 sessions, since September, have been taken up, resulting in improved attendance and punctuality for many pupils.

You also took the decisive step, in June 2015, to replace the local authority educational welfare service with an external provider. The work currently being undertaken, in partnership with staff from the school, is showing the early signs of paying dividends. Overall attendance has improved, although it still remains below the national average. Moreover, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school, compared with 2015, has halved. Nonetheless, there is still room for further action to ensure that improvements are sustained and that the 'false dawn' seen at the time of the last inspection is not repeated. The impact of the work that the educational welfare officer undertakes is not rigorously tracked. As a result, governors are not fully able to hold you to account for your actions or ensure that they are getting good value for money. Your action plan for improving attendance communicates ambitious aims. However, a lack of detailed actions and clear milestones means that you and other senior leaders cannot accurately evaluate if you are on track to sustain improvements and reach the targets you have set. You do not authorise holidays that are taken by pupils during term time.

Despite the success of providing a free breakfast club in improving punctuality for many pupils, punctuality is still an area you have rightly identified as requiring further action as there remains a hard-core group of pupils who are regularly late for school.

External support

The local authority provides light-touch support to the school, usually visiting once per term. Records of visits from this academic year show that discussions and challenge around attendance have not been detailed or robust. As a consequence, wider-ranging strategies, such as learning from other local authority schools that have been successful in raising pupils' attendance, have not been explored.

Priorities for further improvement

- Continue to build on the recent improvements in raising attendance by:
 - rigorously tracking the impact of the work of the educational welfare officer on improving attendance for groups of pupils and individual pupils
 - revising your action plan for raising attendance so that it details precisely what actions are planned throughout the year
 - adding milestones to your action plan for raising attendance so that you and governors are able to check if you are on track to reach your targets.

- Improve the punctuality of those pupils who are regularly late for 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 Liverpool City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Martin Bell
Her Majesty's Inspector