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Ms Tina Harvey
Headteacher
Perseid School
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Dear Ms Harvey

Short inspection of Perseid School

Following my visit to the school with John Lambern, Her Majesty's Inspector, on 1 December 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be outstanding in March 2012.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

The school has continued to increase in size to meet the needs of pupils who have a wide range of profound and multiple learning difficulties or other special educational needs. A number of new building projects have been completed since the school was last inspected. The lower school site has recently been enlarged to provide additional classrooms and improved facilities for pupils. Further expansion at the upper school site is now planned to take account of the larger number of pupils who will move on from the lower school. You have not allowed any of this to distract you from raising teaching and learning standards across the school. Pupils have benefited from the improvements and many make excellent progress from their starting points. External partners and other professionals recognise that leaders and governors are committed to ensuring that the school remains a centre of excellence that others can learn from. This has led to Perseid School becoming the hub of a teaching school alliance and a valued training provider within the local area.

The school is a happy and inspirational place. Pupils are keen to get off the buses when they arrive because they enjoy coming to school. They are reassured by the established routines and familiar faces of their keyworkers. Staff keep in regular touch with pupils' families through diaries or calls home. Parents are invited to visit the school and share their children's learning experiences on a regular basis, and can contact the family liaison officer at any time. Parents say they appreciate the support

and the wrap-around care that is provided by all staff at the school. They miss it during the holidays because the school plays such a significant role in the lives of their children.

After the last inspection, you were quick to address the only identified area for improvement. Assessment information is now used very effectively across the school. Your current systems draw on comprehensive information about every pupil and track the progress they make from established starting points. You use a wide range of progress measures that help you to assess social, communication and sensory progress, as well as achievement in subjects. Teachers, support staff and therapists work together to ensure that pupils' targets are meaningful and take account of all identified needs. This information is reviewed regularly to provide further challenges for pupils to work towards.

The school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is very accurate. You reflect on what difference your actions are making and draw on the advice of other professionals to confirm your findings. This helps you to plan further improvements which are quickly implemented. You will not compromise on the high standards of care and education provided throughout the school. For example, governors insisted that the local authority conduct a full review of health and care services to ensure that the diverse needs of the growing number of pupils attending the school could continue to be met. This led to a significant increase in the support provided to the school by other professionals. Consequently, all pupils continue to receive high-quality support to allow them to make outstanding progress. Leaders and governors are continually looking for ways to make further improvements. For example, the number of learning pathways has been increased to reflect the different needs of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. This has allowed teaching strategies and the physical environment to be adapted to allow pupils to make more rapid progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and remain a high priority for staff. Systems and procedures are constantly evaluated by leaders to ensure that they remain effective. Leaders and governors have undertaken training in safer recruitment practices and take account of the latest statutory guidance. All the required employment checks are carried out before any staff appointments are confirmed. Both sites are very well maintained. Therapies and personal care are carried out appropriately and safely using the purpose-built facilities. Appropriate systems are in place for entering and moving around the buildings. These ensure that pupils are kept safe but allow them to be as independent as possible. Child protection roles and responsibilities are known and understood by everyone at both upper and lower school sites. All staff, including those who join the school after the start of the year, receive regular training and can demonstrate that they know what to do if they have any concerns. They receive regular updates that reflect the latest statutory guidance issued. Parents and staff consider that pupils are kept very safe at the school. Staff know all pupils and their

families very well and take action if they think further support is needed. They work closely with other professionals to ensure that pupils get access to the services that they need.

Inspection findings

- All staff, including teachers, therapists and support workers, use the detailed assessment information effectively. Pupils' agreed targets are shared and displayed in all classrooms. This ensures that all learning activities are closely aligned to the needs of individual pupils, and that key skills can be constantly reinforced and practised. For example, teachers promote literacy and numeracy skills wherever possible. They plan creative and engaging activities that capture the interest of pupils and encourage them to concentrate for longer periods of time. As a result, many pupils make rapid progress and move on to more challenging activities quickly.
- Staff use effective communication strategies that are modelled consistently across the school. The methods used take account of different abilities and levels of understanding, and pupils are supported to communicate in the best way for them. This allows them to be as independent as possible when making choices about what they learn and what they wish to do.
- The quality of teaching is continually monitored by leaders to ensure that standards remain high across the school. Effective coaching support from senior leaders has helped new or inexperienced teachers to reach the high standards expected as quickly as possible.
- All staff benefit from an extensive programme of training opportunities and professional accreditation. This has helped them move on to further posts of responsibility within the school and has allowed you to appoint high-quality middle and senior leaders as the school has grown in size. The school has a committed and stable team of staff who share your vision and strive for high standards.
- The attendance of pupils is monitored very closely. When absence becomes a cause of concern, it is followed up with parents and carers without delay. Consequently, attendance continues to improve and is comparable to mainstream schools.
- Pupils enjoy a wide range of enrichment activities as part of the planned curriculum. This allow pupils to experience life outside their homes and the school. For example, a group of pupils recently presented a musical composition at the Albert Hall. They worked closely with a team of professional musicians to understand the sequences and patterns of the music. This gave them enough confidence to perform in an unknown environment for the first time.
- The school is the hub of a teaching school alliance and staff use their specialist knowledge to deliver training and support to other special and mainstream colleagues. You work effectively with other schools and specialist services to promote good practice. For example, leaders deliver training to new special educational needs coordinators to allow them to gain the required

postgraduate national accreditation. You are also providing coaching and challenge to leaders from an improving mainstream school. You are able to carry out these additional responsibilities because your leadership team works together efficiently and has a precise understanding of the action plans you have all agreed.

- Governance continues to be a strength of the school. The governing body provides very effective support to school leaders. It commissions external reports to moderate the findings of leaders and ask challenging questions. Designated members of the governing body participate in regular meetings to review pupils' progress and welfare. They also monitor the school's safeguarding arrangements closely and effectively.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the achievements and destinations of older pupils within further education are reflected in the school's own self-evaluation and action plans
- further opportunities to share outstanding practice beyond existing local area partnerships are sought.

This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Cox
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the associate headteacher and members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors met with groups of teachers and support staff, and considered the 99 responses to the staff questionnaire. Meetings were also held with occupational health and speech and language therapists. A telephone conversation with the Chair of the Governing Body and meetings with the Vice-Chair and two members of the Governing Body took place. Telephone conversations were held with a representative of the local authority, the Director of Education for the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the Director of the Intensive Interaction Institute and a headteacher of an improving school currently supported by Perseid senior leaders. Inspectors spoke to some parents at the start of the day and evaluated the responses to the online Parent View questionnaire and the school's own parental surveys. Inspectors made short visits to all classes at both the lower and upper school sites, accompanied by senior leaders. The head boy and

head girl met with an inspector. Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, pupils' progress tracking information and evidence of safeguarding arrangements.