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22 December 2015

Mr Justin Innes  
Limington House School  
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Hampshire  
RG22 6PS

Dear Mr Innes

### **Short inspection of Limington House School**

Following my visit to the school on 25 November 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 good in October 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

You and your leadership team have worked tirelessly to ensure that standards of teaching and learning are high and that pupils continue to make good progress. Following your appointment as headteacher in January 2015, you quickly identified that the school's performance had weakened since its previous inspection. You immediately took effective action to arrest the decline. You raised expectations and successfully restored high standards of teaching. Leadership in the school has been further strengthened by the appointment of a deputy headteacher and new Chair of the Governing Body.

There is no doubt that all pupils make good progress at the school, comparing well with other pupils with similar starting points. Many pupils make much better than expected progress in all areas of learning, including disadvantaged pupils. You have established searching systems to assess pupils' attainment and progress, including termly pupil progress meetings and reviews of pupils' education plans. You ensure that teachers' assessments are accurate. As a result of your analysis, you have identified that more of the most-able pupils could make outstanding progress, particularly beyond Key Stage 1.

All staff focus on improving pupils' communication, whether spoken, signed or with picture recognition. For the small group of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, an impressive system to capture small steps of progress is in place and has revitalised staff's understanding of their pupils' developmental stages. As a

result, a wealth of intricate detail of each pupil's achievement provides an encouraging record of achievement for parents and staff.

You have made it a priority to meet parents and carers, and be seen out and about in the school community. Several parents comment that they are reassured by being greeted by name when they arrive in the morning to drop off their children. The leadership team is further strengthened by the excellent work of the lead professional who liaises with parents, social workers, healthcare professionals and therapists to provide all-round support for families and their children.

Pupils have excellent experiences, which equip them well for later life and provide a strong understanding of citizenship, British values, other faiths and cultures and involvement in sporting and artistic events. For example, primary pupils took part in a French theme day recently, speaking French and eating French foods. There is an active school council, which helps to determine direction and activities in the school.

Pupils are proud of their school and behave well. They know they are in school to learn and take an interest in their work. They wear their school uniform neatly, and look after their belongings and each other. Pupils attend well, with rates that are very close to national figures for mainstream schools, notwithstanding those pupils with medical conditions and illnesses that sometimes prevent full attendance. They try hard to concentrate and have strong relationships with the staff who work with them. Pupils with complex behavioural difficulties are supported very well and, because staff pay careful attention to improving communication, pupils' behaviour improves during their time at the school.

When you took up your post as headteacher, you completely agreed with the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Leaders have tackled these effectively so that:

- teachers plan challenging lessons carefully, making sure that no time is lost while pupils wait for their turn to communicate
- learning support assistants are used effectively, leading and teaching small groups of pupils to ensure their full engagement and participation
- plans are now well under way to ensure that there is a covered walkway and entrance to the school in order to provide more protection for pupils on arrival and departure
- the appearance of the school site has been improved, with better fencing and gates in particular.

Your focus is wholeheartedly on improving teaching so that more is outstanding. You are determined that the most-able pupils will make sustained outstanding progress throughout each key stage. You regard every member of staff as a leader in their own area and, as a result, middle leadership roles are developing for different subjects and aspects of the school's work. It is early days, but it is clearly a wise

approach to support your determination to be outstanding. Governors have developed their understanding of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching in the school, and are now providing considerable challenge.

Access in and out of the accommodation for the early years is better, although you acknowledge that the outdoor learning area could be more attractive, comfortable and stimulating. You recognise that better outdoor resources will provide even more opportunities for the already strong teaching in the early years.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has made sure that all arrangements for safeguarding and child protection meet requirements and are followed by every member of staff. All staff understand their responsibility to safeguard pupils and know exactly what to do if they have a concern. All parents agree that pupils are safe in school. Records are detailed and meticulous. All checks on staff who work with pupils have been carried out assiduously; records are up to date and held securely. Records of concerns are updated on a useful timeline, which clearly shows the school's care and close attention to pupils' well-being, both at school and at home. Communication with healthcare professionals and social workers is strong and child-centred.

Any serious incidents are recorded in detail and on time, including incidents of physical intervention, helping to ensure pupils' safety. Regular staff training in safeguarding and child protection takes place, in addition to updates throughout the year and briefings for new staff. Staff have recently attended training related to preventing extremism and radicalisation; they have a good understanding of their obligations under the Prevent duty. You have made improvements to the school site since the previous inspection, including better fences and gates in enclosed areas.

### **Inspection findings**

- On taking up your post, you quickly identified that governance needed to improve. Following your appointment, a local authority audit of governance was carried out, a new Chair of the Governing Body was elected and the governing body was reconstituted with a better committee structure. Governors have set about finding out more about pupils' progress and are resolute about holding the school to account for its performance. They visit frequently and play a strategic role in leading and challenging the school.
- The appointment of a deputy headteacher with experience of mainstream schools has brought further experience and ambition to the senior team. There is now a secure senior leadership structure, including your highly experienced and skilled assistant headteacher and the school business manager.
- You correctly identified that leadership needed to be strengthened even more and have established leadership responsibilities throughout the school to

promote further improvement. New middle leaders have written development plans, led meetings and taken more responsibility for driving improvement in pupils' progress. Although the new leadership roles are in their infancy, there are clear signs that staff feel more accountable and involved in the strategic direction of the school.

- You have overhauled the monitoring of teaching and the management of staff performance. Staff have been observed teaching and supporting pupils regularly since your appointment; they are given valuable feedback on how to improve, as well as challenging targets to meet and relevant training. Staff appointed to the school, including two newly qualified teachers, are extremely well supported and have made an excellent start to their careers.
- Leaders and governors make sure that the use of the pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils, the sports premium and catch-up funding provide value for money. For example, pupil premium funding is used effectively to improve eligible pupils' progress through the purchase of additional equipment to aid communication. Primary class staff have benefited from observing skilled sports specialists leading lessons, funded through the sports premium.
- Relationships and communication with parents are strong. You have ensured that the school website is clear, informative and compliant with government requirements. Nearly all parents are impressed by the leadership of the school. They are delighted with the progress their children are making and the way they are supported at home with communication systems.
- A few parents and a very small number of staff have expressed some concerns about changes in leadership and staffing over the last year and have found new approaches unsettling. You are acutely aware that working together with parents is an essential part of improving life chances for pupils, so you are endeavouring to provide parents with reassurance.
- During the inspection, I noted the important role played by learning support assistants in ensuring pupils' progress. For example, we jointly observed a short session where pupils were preparing the ingredients for a quiche. The session was carefully planned by the teacher to ensure individual pupils' progress towards targets. Patient teaching and support from the learning support assistants led to excellent progress from all pupils, who had to try out unfamiliar tastes, make more than one attempt to roll out pastry successfully, and explore the experience of breaking and beating an egg.
- No opportunities are lost to promote communication through the formal arrangements for eating snacks and lunches. During a lunchtime session observed during the inspection, pupils were making choices, eating with good table manners and managing independently to clear their tables and ask politely for desserts. The lunchtime was a civilised, friendly and relaxed social occasion enjoyed by teachers, assistants, pupils and kitchen staff alike.

- Work to develop pupils' reading is progressing well. Pupils enjoy handling, looking through and reading books. Effective use of pictorial resources, props, signs and sounds support pupils' sustained memory for words and storytelling. For example, in one session based on the tale of King Arthur, post-16 learners were able to sequence a story using video clips of themselves acting out the story. In another session, learners independently sequenced a series of sentences, using a helpful mixture of words and pictures. Some more-able students composed and wrote their own sentences, using adjectives such as 'brave' to describe characters in the story.
- Children in the early years make good progress because of highly effective teaching. Early years staff make sure that they aim high. They have visited schools with outstanding early years provision in order to see excellent practice, which is clearly paying off in their own lesson planning. For example, in a session observed during the inspection, children were divided into two groups. One group of children were happily involved in an excellent sensory session, responding to different textures and music, while another group joyfully participated in a session involving singing, jumping, counting, and identifying numbers up to ten. All children sustained their concentration impressively and made visible gains in their communication and understanding of number.
- Older learners in the post-16 provision have well-structured study programmes which equip them well for their next steps, promoting their independence and providing useful experience in the work place.
- The local authority took swift action when it became clear that the school's performance had deteriorated. Monthly visits from the leadership partner and additional support from the mathematics and English advisory team ensured that teaching and pupils' progress were quickly back on track. Under the current leadership, much less support has been needed.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- more teaching is securely outstanding to ensure excellent progress for all pupils, especially the most able
- leaders of subjects and areas in the school further develop their confidence and skills
- the outdoor accommodation for the early years is improved in order to enhance children's learning and sensory experiences.

Yours sincerely

Janet Pearce

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, other leaders and the Chair of the Governing Body. I also spoke to a representative of Hampshire local authority on the telephone. We made short visits to every class to observe teaching and learning. I observed and spoke to pupils at snack times and during lunchtimes. I met a small group of teachers and learning support assistants and had a meeting with the lead professional. I scrutinised a sample of pupils' work. I took account of 16 responses to the staff survey and 26 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also evaluated the school's own parent survey from July 2015 and I received one letter from a parent. I considered a range of the school's documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, records of leaders' check on the quality of teaching, the school improvement plan and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. We discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness.