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Mr D Victor
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Victor

Short inspection of Greenside School

Following my visit to the school with Stephanie Lipinski-Barltrop on 12 July 2016, 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

You and the senior leadership team are maintaining and further strengthening the positive culture and ethos of this good school. This is reflected in the high expectations staff set for themselves and for their pupils. Staff, pupils, parents and carers have a strong commitment to continual improvement and a belief that the school can be outstanding in all aspects of its work. Senior leaders demonstrate a collaborative sense of purpose which encourages and inspires colleagues to work with them. Your quiet approachable style is appreciated by staff and pupils alike. Newly qualified teachers praised the high quality of support that they have been given to develop all aspects of their work saying, 'it is very much a community at this school, we work as a team and pull together'. This reflects what the vast majority of parents also say about the staff's positive approach to pupils and their families. Senior leaders are seen as positive role models for their new colleagues.

Well established routines ensure that the atmosphere in class is calm and purposeful. Pupils are thoughtfully supported by skilled and capable staff. This prevents pupils from worrying about what might go wrong as they trust the adults who work with them, so any fear of failure is overcome. As a result, pupils extend the boundaries of their learning and try new experiences. Pupils also support one another. In classrooms at breaktime, the snack was often served by members of the class. Pupils are able to support the choices their friends make during snacktime and demonstrate their developing independence. Pupils value and enjoy the

opportunities they have to learn and develop the skills they need to manage day-to-day activities without extra help.

The school owns and manages a shop called the Greenside Studio. It is based in the local parade of shops and supports pupils to develop their communication, social interaction and independence skills by working within the local community. It is a purposeful learning environment where pupils are happy participating in the daily life of the shop, and developing their literacy and numeracy skills while serving members of the general public. Through this, pupils learn the skills they need to participate in life beyond school as full members of their community.

Some of the school's work is very skilled and has been nationally recognised for its quality; for example, in the school's recent award from the National Autistic Society.

At the previous inspection, inspectors praised pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning which they said were the result of highly effective support from all staff. They also highlighted two areas for improvement. Leaders have taken successful action to tackle these areas:

- Teachers' improved monitoring of the academic progress that pupils make means that they are now able to make use of a wider range of assessment information. Teachers and support staff work well together to ensure that the needs of individual pupils are met because the tasks set for them in lessons are personalised and appropriate to their starting points and range of abilities.
- Leaders have developed a range of professional development materials and access to resources which ensure that staff are well equipped to meet the needs of pupils. For example, the one-to-one interventions provide a number of pupils with good access to the curriculum at a level appropriate to their individual attainment, likes, and interests. Staff have made good use of this high-quality training to ensure that pupils are given sufficient time to respond to tasks on their own and develop the skills to learn independently.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The child protection policy is up to date and the designated lead receives training every two years. Rigorous safer recruitment and vetting procedures are in place and work well. Child protection training is provided every year to staff and all staff are aware of their responsibilities. The school is a secure site where pupils are considered carefully and well looked after. Any absences are followed up swiftly and children are taught how to stay safe.

Well-trained and skilled staff use effective communication techniques to offer appropriate support to pupils, enabling them to communicate as effectively as they can. All moments of communication are recognised, acknowledged, valued and listened to. As a result, pupils have a 'voice' that enables them to inform staff about their successes and their concerns. Consequently, pupils know that staff understand them and will keep them safe.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and governors have an accurate view about what the school does well and what needs to be done to improve it even further. Staff work hard to make sure that the needs of pupils are understood and are recorded in detail so that both staff and pupils' families can share this understanding. Staff then live up to the challenge of meeting these needs and do so in a range of creative and often innovative ways.
- Leaders have implemented a well-designed curriculum that ensures that pupils have appropriate opportunities to develop their skills and become more independent. Staff take a very positive approach to delivering a more creative curriculum which has been developed since the last inspection and can be seen through much of the school's work. Pupils happily engage in drama and re-play stories they have been told or read. Through this, they also share their own opinions and decisions and any choices that they may have made. This high-quality teaching is supporting pupils well in developing their independence skills and their readiness for the next stage in their learning or adult life.
- Leaders' robust monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning continues. Senior leaders routinely observe lessons and give useful feedback which staff are able to use to develop their practice further. Assessment is developing and all staff have a defined role in the recording of pupils' progress. However, assessment of the wider skills, described by the headteacher as 'invisible skills' which the school and staff value highly, are not yet as accurately recorded or measured. Assessments are not coordinated well enough to ensure that all the gaps in pupils' development are identified and met.
- Staff have a clear recording system that measures the effectiveness of the interventions for children looked after. However, the personal education plans written for these pupils lack clarity. Consequently, targets set for pupils' learning are not sharp enough to ensure that pupils develop the precise skills they need. While you are not wholly responsible for these documents, you understand that staff need to work with other agencies to improve this element of planning.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Pupils are also very willing to share ideas and support their peers. All treat each other with sensitivity and respect. Staff work hard to use the communication systems available to them including speech, signing, symbols and gestures, to ensure that pupils can communicate as effectively as possible. Leaders recognise that these strategies can be improved further for those with the most complex needs through the introduction of more sensitive communication technology. For example, through switch activated speech systems.
- Pupils who are taught at home due to their high medical needs, have access to the same thematic curriculum as their peers. Their academic progress, as well as their progress in other areas such as communication and skills development, is measured to ensure accurate targets are set.

- Pupils are happy to come to school and are confident that those around them will help them learn in a way which interests them and makes their learning worthwhile. Parents value the improving information they receive from the school twice a year which gives them information about their child's progress. However, this reporting does not yet give sufficient breadth of information to include progress made in developing pupils' well-being or about pupils' developing independence. This information is better communicated for the pupils in post-16 education.
- Pupils' behaviour is impeccable. They are ready and willing to learn, and very rarely do staff need to intervene. Behaviour logs show that staff are well trained to de-escalate challenging behaviour because they know their pupils well. The depth of the recording requires further development. It does not yet allow leaders and staff to have a secure understanding of the triggers for negative behaviour which would reduce the incidents of physical intervention still further.
- The local authority provides effective support for the school. Advisers have brokered appropriate 'light touch' analysis and advice for school leaders. They have also encouraged and facilitated greater collaboration with other schools.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- systems for tracking pupils' progress are further developed to ensure that all aspects of pupils' learning and personal development are incorporated in one place, so provision is rapidly adjusted to meet pupils' emerging needs
- the recording of behaviour includes analysis of the triggers for incidents where physical intervention is necessary and this information can then be used by staff to support pupils to manage and overcome challenges that may lead to a deterioration in their behaviour.

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

Yours sincerely

Mary Rayner
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors spoke with the headteacher, assistant headteachers and the behaviour lead. Inspectors spoke with pupils as they went into classrooms and at break and lunchtimes. Telephone calls were made to a governor and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors observed pupils in classrooms, and pupils' work and folders were jointly scrutinised with the headteacher. Recent performance information was discussed, and safeguarding documentation and other records were scrutinised. Inspectors also reviewed responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, which collects parents' views about the school's work.