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Michelle Blackman
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Blackman

Short inspection of North East Surrey Secondary Short Stay School

Following my visit to the school on 20 September 2016 with Ross Macdonald, Ofsted Inspector, 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.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You rightly identified that since the previous inspection there had been a drop in standards. Weaknesses in the quality of governance, a mixed picture of teaching exacerbated by turnover in staff and limited capacity in leadership all contributed to the decline. Nevertheless, with characteristic resilience and determination, you have maintained your grip on pupils' well-being and behaviour, sustained your strong relationships with partner schools and restored the high quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Over the last 18 months, you and your team have ensured that staffing has stabilised, weaker teaching has been eradicated and staff now have a workable and effective system to measure and track pupils' progress. The management committee has been strengthened and now provides clear direction, challenging the school to do better and be more ambitious. You have made strong appointments to the staff team, which has added further security and expertise. Teachers expect pupils to work hard: they set meaningful targets and plan learning with the pupils' ability and needs in mind. As a result, pupils are achieving well and their progress is good.

External support from a leadership partner has provided leaders with challenge, practical guidance and also checked that pupils' progress is being assessed accurately.

You have identified that pupils currently admitted to the school have an increasingly complex range of needs and you are ensuring that staff are more prepared for this through good communication and training.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are appropriate and efficient. Leaders have ensured that the school's checks on staff employed to work in the school meet all statutory requirements. Communication is a strength in the school. Records of safeguarding concerns are detailed and of high quality, providing a comprehensive and useful chronology that can be easily shared with other professionals if necessary.

All staff benefit from thorough training in all aspects of safeguarding and child protection. You have ensured that there is plenty of capacity within the leadership team across both school sites by increasing the number of designated safeguarding leaders. An in-depth knowledge of pupils, close-knit work with other agencies who work to protect children and young people, in addition to strong bonds with parents, help to minimise risk for pupils. Staff appreciate the daily briefings in which they exchange information about pupils. The safety of pupils who attend college or vocational courses with alternative providers is carefully monitored. In this way, pupils' welfare and protection are at the heart of the school's work.

Prompt and necessarily urgent action is taken to alert relevant authorities if pupils go missing or run away. Some pupils in the school are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation, so staff are extremely alert to any signs that a pupil is at risk.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. Topical themes and concerns are threaded through the personal, social and health education programmes (PSHE), including essential information to help pupils understand the risks of inappropriate use of social media, gangs, drugs and alcohol.

Inspection findings

- Across both sites, leaders have created a unified, safe, secure and well-ordered place for pupils to learn and prepare for their next steps. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment, together with strong care and warm relationships, are consistently good throughout the school.
- School leaders and staff know and understand the pupils extremely well and identify their needs promptly. Leaders ensure that pupils study appropriate programmes to help them catch up with learning, regain confidence and regulate their behaviour. Pupils who attend alternative provision make good progress because the school monitors the quality of pupils' learning closely.
- As a result of the improved assessment system, pupils are achieving better results at the end of their time in the school, particularly those older pupils who are admitted in Year 10 and complete their studies in the school through to the end of Year 11. Many pupils achieve grades at GCSE that match their ability and enable them to get off to a good start with college courses and further training.

The most able pupils in the school have every reasonable opportunity to catch up, study relevant subjects and achieve results commensurate with their ability.

- Leadership has been strengthened through the appointment of a deputy headteacher and further developments to the roles of the assistant headteachers. The leadership team is the secure core of the school, providing solid strength and capacity. Leadership opportunities have opened up for other staff, who are now taking on responsibilities for pupils' learning and behaviour across both sites. As a result, the school caters well for pupils both academically and emotionally.
- Staff training and development is a growing strength of the school. All staff have a chance to study, attend relevant courses and bring back their learning and skills to the school. As a result, staff are settled and able to move up the career ladder. Morale is high and staff enjoy their work, notwithstanding its undoubted challenges.
- Pupils leave the school in a strong position to take their next steps. A deep focus on developing pupils' reading skills and communication supports the next stage in their education. Personalised guidance about careers and further education, in addition to appropriate vocational programmes, ensure that all pupils go on to education, employment or training. No pupils are allowed to slip through the net and leaders frequently follow up those who have left the school to check that they are still attending their current placement and doing well.
- Pupils behave well in the school. They are willing to learn, want to improve their language, levels of aggression and self-control. Pupils are polite to staff and each other and genuinely appreciate the support they are given. As the headteacher says, the pupils deserve every chance to succeed and the pupils quickly get to understand that even if they make mistakes and fall short, the school will help them to get better.
- Pupils have many opportunities to develop themselves and learn about the world around them. They take part in raising funds for charity, sports events and celebrations of key events in the national and international calendar. Visiting speakers give pupils a window on the outside world and enable them to learn about individual responsibility and keeping safe and healthy. Pupils can also gain additional useful skills. For example, most pupils have been trained in first aid.
- Since the previous inspection, the work of the management committee has improved. A review of governance in May 2015 identified that a better balance of challenge with support was necessary. New members with varied professional experience were appointed. Governors visit the school more frequently and are developing greater knowledge of the work of the school. They provide some sharp challenge for leaders and are adding drive and momentum for plans for the future of the school.
- Leaders are under no illusions about what needs to improve and are not content with standing still. While attendance has steadily improved over time since the last inspection, it is certainly an ever-present priority for school leaders. The increasing number of pupils admitted to the school who have very complex emotional difficulties, mental health problems and specific learning needs has created additional challenges for leaders who wish to maintain good attendance and progress.
- Teachers make effective use of pupils' assessment information to set targets and plan work, and in the best practice pupils know exactly what they are doing well

and what to improve to get to the next stage. However, in a few cases, pupils are not clear about their next steps or how to improve their work.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all pupils understand what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve
- every reasonable step is taken to improve attendance of those individual pupils whose rates of absence still cause concern.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Pearce
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- Inspectors focused on the following key aspects of the school's work:
 - whether safeguarding was effective in the school
 - how well leaders and staff were assessing pupils' progress and using this information to set realistic and ambitious targets
 - pupils' academic progress and improvements to their behaviour
 - whether pupils were well prepared for the next stage in their education
 - the impact of the school on improving pupils' attendance.
- Inspectors met with school leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, members of the management committee and the leadership partner.
- Learning was observed in a wide range of lessons across both sites. Inspectors spoke to pupils and looked at their work.
- Inspectors evaluated the school's systems for assessing pupils' progress from entry to the school. The school's current performance information and end-of-year results were analysed. Inspectors also considered the school's records of pupils' destinations.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's safeguarding records and evaluated how effectively staff and leaders act upon concerns about pupils.
- Information about pupils' attendance at the school and alternative provision was analysed.
- A range of documentation related to the leadership of teaching, learning and assessment was scrutinised.