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Mrs Sarah Santos
Headteacher
Paddock School
Priory Lane
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Dear Mrs Santos

Short inspection of Paddock School

Following my visit to the school on 27 September 2016 with Rosemarie McCarthy, 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 outstanding in May 2013.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your leadership team have ensured that there are very high levels of consistency in practice across the school's three sites. Consequently, the pupils, who all have significant special educational needs and/or disabilities, benefit from strong practice throughout their school career.

There is an atmosphere of calm in the school. Members of staff are well trained to deal with any challenging behaviour efficiently and without fuss. Teachers plan lessons very effectively so that each individual pupil's needs are met. Therapists are involved in setting targets and planning lessons alongside teachers so that pupils are engaged in activities which meet both their learning and their health needs. Pupils are very well prepared for life after school because they have opportunities to practise work-related skills in real environments such as the school's café.

There are two key strands at the heart of the school's work. First, the development of meaningful communication skills and, second, the promotion of independence. Leaders, teachers and other adults take every opportunity across all curriculum areas to improve these skills. Adults use a range of effective communication strategies to ensure that their interaction with pupils is successful. However, pupils do not have as many opportunities to practise their skills in communicating successfully with their peers.

At the time of the last inspection, leaders were asked to refine the way in which work was marked and feedback provided to pupils. This recommendation has been fully addressed, and pupils now receive meaningful written feedback on their achievements.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have made sure that safeguarding is given the highest priority in this school. Several members of staff have been trained as designated safeguarding leads, so that there is always a trained person on each of the school's sites. A senior leader holds overall responsibility to make sure that systems are consistent and that procedures remain up to date. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

The safeguarding team holds regular meetings to discuss any issues or concerns. A record is kept of 'niggles' which inform decision-making if concerns later escalate. Members of staff at all levels understand how to raise concerns. They recognise the importance of keeping accurate records, including in the 'niggle book'.

The school's three sites are kept secure and you have implemented appropriate changes in routine when circumstances change. This makes sure that any additional risks to pupils' safety are reduced. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, for example when using sharp knives to chop vegetables to make soup.

Leaders and governors have ensured that their procedures remain robust. They recently commissioned a safeguarding audit of the school's procedures, which found no concerns. Members of staff are vigilant in identifying any indicators of abuse, including those relating to female genital mutilation, child sexual exploitation and radicalisation. They are aware that although they work with pupils who have significant and complex needs, these pupils can still be affected by such issues.

Inspection findings

- You and your senior leadership team have detailed knowledge about pupils in the school and their individual needs and circumstances. This enables you to pinpoint exactly what each pupil needs in order to make the best possible progress. Leaders then make sure that they receive high-quality teaching and check that their progress meets your high expectations.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively. Coupled with leaders' and teachers' detailed knowledge of pupils, this means that this group of pupils make at least as much progress as others from similar starting points.
- The whole-school system for managing incidents of challenging or inappropriate behaviour works very well. This is because it is highly consistent. Staff are well trained in de-escalation techniques and remain calm when incidents occur. Where appropriate, leaders, therapists and class teams work together to draw up

individual behaviour plans. These plans take a positive stance and start with what pupils can do and what their interests are. The plans are well thought out and implemented effectively.

- Leaders have undertaken a full review of assessment procedures used in the school. You have ceased to use systems which you found were no longer useful and created a comprehensive system for assessing exactly what pupils can and cannot do. You work closely with leaders in other outstanding special schools to make sure that your assessments are accurate. You also take a lead in the local authority in this area of work.
- Pupils make excellent progress, particularly in communication, reading, writing and mathematics. They learn to recognise symbols and pictures, helping them to make sense of the world around them. Most-able pupils learn to read basic words and use these skills to follow instructions or read simple texts.
- Pupils are very well prepared for life after school. Older students undertake vocational courses linked closely to possible future employment routes. Pupils are employed in the school's café, which is open to the public, offering real-life work experience within a supportive environment.
- Teachers and other adults plan very carefully, enabling pupils to make small but significant steps towards completing tasks independently. Activities are highly differentiated so that all pupils are able to access learning at an appropriate level. For example, in a food preparation activity, we saw pupils working under varying levels of supervision. One pupil worked under the careful eye of the teacher and was able to chop carrots with very little help. Another pupil worked closely with an adult and was able to cross the room to match symbols and thereby retrieve the ingredients and utensils she needed to make cake mixture. Pupils make secure and sustained progress from their very low starting points.
- Adults use a variety of communication strategies, depending on the skills and preferences of individual pupils. They reduce the amount of verbal information they use to make their instructions clear. They supplement speech with visual supports and signing to promote pupils' understanding. As a result, pupils make rapid progress in the development of their communication skills. However, pupils have fewer opportunities to practise what they have learned when communicating with their peers.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that pupils have more extensive opportunities to communicate successfully with their peers by:

- sharing experiences
- making and responding to requests
- developing awareness of others around them.

I am copying this letter to the co-chairs of the governing body and the director of children's services for Wandsworth. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Gaynor Roberts
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors agreed to prioritise the following areas with the school at the start of the inspection: the school's arrangements for managing challenging behaviour and the systems to record this; arrangements for assessing pupils' outcomes and checking the accuracy of these; the amount of progress pupils make from their starting points, especially the most able; and whether leaders have fully addressed the recommendation from the previous inspection relating to marking and feedback.

Inspectors carried out activities to explore these areas during the inspection. Meetings were held with senior leaders, including those responsible for behaviour and safeguarding. Inspectors identified a cohort of pupils of different ages and abilities and observed them in lessons. They also scrutinised information about these pupils' achievement over time, including looking at books, reports and assessments. Inspectors met with one of the co-chairs of the governing body and with a group of staff. They considered responses received to the parent and staff questionnaires. Inspectors undertook observations in lessons on all three school sites. These observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders. A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including that relating to safeguarding, pupils' progress, governance and school development planning.