

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Vicki Clovis
Headteacher
Maple Ridge School
Maple Crescent
Basingstoke
RG21 5SX

Dear Mrs Clovis

Short inspection of Maple Ridge School

Following my visit to your school on 12 October 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 September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

Leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have made a strong start in your new role as headteacher because you have high expectations of how well pupils at Maple Ridge can achieve. You have built on the previous good work of leaders and have adroitly identified the areas that require further attention. You have set out a clear vision for the school of 'working together to secure the most relevant education for all and believing anything is possible'. As a result, staff and parents are very positive about the school and its future.

You and your leaders have made the most of your links with the local authority and other special schools in the region. The local authority has provided significant challenge since the previous inspection, as well as providing detailed information that helps you check that pupils at Maple Ridge are making good progress compared to others. You have worked with other local leaders to develop useful arrangements to replace the previous national assessment system. Above all, leaders have developed a very strong partnership with the local secondary special school so that pupils can access extra facilities and staff can develop their expertise across all key stages.

Leaders have effectively addressed the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. There is a useful assessment system in place that teachers use well in their planning and teaching. Teachers also provide suitable guidance and feedback

that pupils find helpful to learn new skills or ideas. Leaders have identified the best practice in the school and shared this with all staff. Leaders have also made good use of links with outstanding schools to train staff. Consequently, teaching across the school is very strong and there is a consistent focus on improving pupils' communication skills.

Leaders provide very good support for teachers and other staff with a range of bespoke activities that give staff the skills to meet the increasingly complex needs of the pupils. Teachers and other staff work well together to improve their practice, visit other schools and attend specialist courses. Staff report that systems to reward performance are fair and thorough but most of all they appreciate that, 'You can ask anyone for help' and that leaders are approachable and 'keep their doors open'.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. There are suitable systems in place to keep children safe. The policies and practices are up to date and appropriately thorough. All staff, including governors, have recently received the relevant training and those staff with additional responsibilities are particularly knowledgeable. There are very good links with other agencies so leaders ensure that pupils receive the best help available. Pupils also receive good advice and guidance about staying safe, including when using social media and avoiding other risks. Vulnerable pupils and their families are also very well supported by specialist staff who work in partnership with parents to ensure that pupils are safe. Consequently, pupils report that they are well cared for and looked after. Parents also spoke warmly about leaders' work, describing the quality of support as 'brilliant'.

Inspection findings

- You have got to know the school well in a short space of time. Leaders have accurately identified the areas that require further attention and have drawn up suitable plans to address these. For example, you are focusing on refining the curriculum to include more opportunities to assess pupils' personal and social development.
- Leaders have planned thoroughly to meet the needs of the growing number of pupils who have an autistic spectrum disorder. You have nimbly adapted classrooms, improved the resources and enhanced teachers' specialist knowledge so that these pupils are very well supported. For example, staff are trained in autism awareness and Attention Autism.
- The governing body is in a time of transition with the departure of some longstanding members. In spite of this loss of experience, governors exercise their duties well because those governors new to the role have already undertaken training and completed their induction. Governors have recently reviewed their range of skills and consequently recruited new governors who have additional expertise. Governors are knowledgeable

about the school and are adept at checking the work of leaders, especially in regard to additional funding. However, governors acknowledge that their review of the funding for disadvantaged pupils could be more sharply focused on the impact that funding has on individual pupils.

- In 2016, pupils made more progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics than similar pupils in other special schools in Hampshire. The progress of current pupils in mathematics is particularly strong with more than half the pupils exceeding their targets.
- Leaders recognise that the progress of pupils in writing was not as strong as they wished in the past. However, leaders took effective steps to address this with training for all staff in developing pupils' writing. Consequently, inspectors found that current pupils are making strong progress in their writing. For example, more pupils are forming letters accurately, spelling confidently and writing longer sentences than in the past.
- All pupils read regularly in school and there are good strategies in place to develop pupils' knowledge of phonics. However, many pupils do not read often enough at home or outside of the allocated reading time. Leaders are working to address this with parents but recognise that more could be done to develop this important skill.
- Pupils in the early years are very well supported to develop their communication skills. There are good systems in place to help pupils form phrases so that they can ask for objects or give their opinions. The classrooms are well organised and staff make the most of a range of resources to promote learning well. The transition between home and the early years is managed very effectively with parents delighted at how well their children settle in.
- Disadvantaged pupils do well in mathematics, writing and reading. They achieve at least the same standards as other pupils in the school and other pupils in special schools across the region. Leaders make good use of the additional funding to provide bespoke support for these pupils, especially in managing their emotions and supporting their wider needs.
- Teaching across the school has many strengths. Teachers plan very effectively for the different groups of pupils in their classes. They work very well with additional adults who are skilful in supporting individuals or groups of pupils. Teachers use their subject knowledge adroitly to plan activities that engage and enthuse pupils. For example, in a lower key stage 2 class, pupils relished using a range of objects including animals, rubber ducks and beads to understand number bonds.
- The curriculum is rightly focused on developing pupils' core skills, including their personal and social development. Teachers are agile in extending or adapting the curriculum to suit the needs of the pupils. However, aspects of the wider curriculum need further refining so that there is a sharper focus on pupils' personal targets and their time in school is made best use of.
- Pupils want to succeed. They enjoy coming to school and learning together. They are tolerant of each other's differences and know the difference between right and wrong.

- The overall attendance of pupils is currently above the national average for special schools. Behaviour around the school is very good, even when a few pupils struggle to focus. Most impressively, some pupils use the 'safe spaces' independently when they are upset or need time to calm down. A few pupils use these rooms frequently. Currently, leaders do not have a sufficient overview of the impact of this strategy on their behaviour.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the work of the school. There is a well-attended and active parents' association that supports the school with fundraising. Parents are very committed to the school because of the difference it makes to the pupils. One parent commented that, 'The school has worked whatever magic they use here and he's a different child at home now.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- make better use of the time spent on the personal and social development curriculum so that pupils achieve greater success in this area
- further develop the partnership between the school and parents to foster regular reading.

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

Yours sincerely

Seamus Murphy
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

For this inspection, inspectors focused on the quality of safeguarding, actions taken since the previous inspection, the progress of disadvantaged pupils, the quality of teaching of writing and the impact of new leadership in the school. Two inspectors visited the school for one day. There were meetings with you, your leaders, staff and governors as well as a phone call with a representative of the local authority. Policies around safeguarding, your own analyses of pupils' achievement and other documents were scrutinised. The inspectors visited all year groups to see teaching and learning. There were formal and informal meetings with pupils, as well as listening to pupils read. The inspectors also looked at pupils' written work in lessons with leaders, in particular English books from key stage 2. The 13 responses to Parent View were analysed as well as taking into account the views of six parents who spoke to the inspectors at the end of the school day.