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Ms Beverley Wright
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Dear Ms Beverley Wright

Short inspection of Maplefields Academy

Following my visit to the school on 2 November 2016 with Linda Lyn-Cook HMI, 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 February 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, governors and leaders are ambitious for the school and have very high expectations of the pupils and the staff. Leaders and governors are highly evaluative of the outcomes of individual pupils and all other aspects of the school's performance and have an effective understanding of school standards. This enables governors to support and challenge leaders well. Consequently, leaders take highly effective actions to improve the provision made for individual pupils and to develop practice further. However, you recognise that you need to develop your self-evaluation and analysis further in order to make further improvements to pupils' behaviour and reduce the number of pupils who abscond from the school site or require physical interventions.

Since the last inspection, you continued to improve the progress pupils make in English across all year groups. Consequently, pupils now make the same very strong progress in English as in other subjects. You improved the progress pupils make in English by improving the quality of teaching, revising the curriculum and supporting pupils' engagement in reading and writing.

Leaders improved the teaching of English in a variety of ways, including:

- setting high expectations
- performance management targets related to pupils' progress in English
- accurate and timely assessment of pupils' skills

- rigorous tracking of pupils' progress
- training on communication and writing
- speech and language therapists working alongside teachers to develop teachers' understanding and practice.

Evidence from visits to classrooms, pupils' books, displays and conversations with pupils show that English teaching is now very strong. Teachers stress that key vocabulary and discussion is a key element of lessons. As a result, pupils were observed expressing themselves confidently.

Teachers know their pupils well. They quickly identify, through weekly progress meetings, those pupils at risk of not making sufficient progress and intervene swiftly to provide bespoke support. Similarly, within lessons, teachers are quick to identify pupils who need help to move their learning on and to provide highly effective support. Pupils who spoke with the inspectors were able to reflect very thoughtfully on their learning and told inspectors that they make good progress in English.

Since the last inspection, leaders have revised the whole curriculum to provide pupils with more opportunities to develop and enrich their vocabulary, so they can express themselves confidently and well, and to apply their literacy and communication skills in a range of subjects. For example, working in the school shop in town enabled pupils to develop their confidence and skills in communicating confidently and clearly with members of the public. Also visits, such as to the theatre, provided pupils with the opportunity to appreciate how well actors use spoken English and stimulated and motivated pupils in terms of their writing in lessons. Teachers have also provided pupils with resources that interest them so they engage in their learning more readily, such as using tablets or e-books or reading to Danny the reading dog. In addition, leaders have also used small, structured teaching groups, known as nurture groups, to improve pupils' engagement in English to good effect.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your staff keep pupils safe. The safeguarding policy and procedures are up to date, take account of the most recent version of 'Keeping children safe in education' (KCSIE) and are fit for purpose. Although you are the designated safeguarding lead and you are fully trained, you have ensured that two additional members of staff have also undertaken the designated safeguarding lead training and together you have ensured that all staff have been comprehensively trained. Staff are clear about what they should be looking for, how they must report safeguarding concerns and how the safeguarding team will deal with referrals. Leaders have recently introduced an electronic system to support the safeguarding process and this has improved efficiency.

You and safeguarding leaders are clear about when to make a referral to the local authority. You are equally clear about your role in the process and that of partners. You are firm in your expectations of others to keep pupils safe. Pupils who spoke with the inspectors or who completed the online questionnaire said that they feel safe at school.

A small minority of pupils need to take medication during the school day and leaders have established an effective system for the administration of medicines. Medicine is securely stored and appropriate procedures, including medical logbooks for each pupil, are employed.

The safeguarding lead governor and the safeguarding committee enable the governing body to maintain an effective oversight of safeguarding, including the security of the site, and evaluating inappropriate behaviour of individual pupils and the impact of staff actions on pupils' subsequent behaviour.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and managers are highly effective. They are ambitious for the school and have high aspirations for all pupils. These aspirations are reflected in the ambitious targets set for each pupil and the rigour with which leaders monitor pupils' progress towards their targets. Leaders know the pupils very well and ensure that those who are at risk of falling behind are identified and that individualised support is provided.
- Governors also know the school very well and they effectively hold leaders to account. They understand the standards achieved and have a sound understanding of individual pupils, including the progress and challenges they face in their learning and behaviour. This has contributed to pupils' strong and sustained progress and their improved behaviour and attendance.
- Although leaders' evaluation skills are highly effective at an individual pupil level, they are not incisive enough at a cohort or whole-school level for non-academic outcomes, such as behaviour or attendance. Consequently, leaders and governors have not assured themselves that they have fully explored all the triggers and contextual factors that affect pupils' behaviour.
- Governors and leaders have used information on the progress, attendance and behaviour of disadvantaged pupils to prioritise and target the use of the pupil premium. This has been very effective and has contributed to the very strong progress made by disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders have used performance management systems very effectively to support school improvement. For example, following the last inspection, performance management targets were directly linked to improving pupils' outcomes in English and improving the teaching of English. This contributed to the very strong progress pupils now make in this subject.
- Leaders have developed a broad and balanced curriculum that very much interests and engages the pupils in their learning. This includes British values, which pupils learn about through lessons, but also through participation in activities such as elections for the school council or role play about a court of law.
- In addition to ensuring high standards of education at Maplefields Academy, leaders and staff also provide effective support and training other schools through their work with the Maplefields Teaching School Alliance.
- Leaders fulfil their statutory duty to promote the education of children looked after. Pupils in the care of the local authority make strong progress.
- Evidence from pupils' performance information, visits to lessons, pupils' work,

talking to pupils and displays shows that overall pupils make very strong progress in each year group and across the curriculum.

- A large proportion of the pupils currently at the school are eligible for support through the pupil premium funding. These pupils make very strong progress in each year group and across the curriculum, as do the relatively small group of the most able pupils.
- Most Year 11 pupils entered GCSE English and mathematics in 2016, compared to no entries in 2014. This is a significant improvement. Similar significant improvements have been made to the destinations secured for pupils and the sustainability of the destination. For example, all 2016 Year 11 pupils are still in their post-16 destinations after six months.
- Teachers know their pupils very well and as a result, plan lessons that pupils find interesting and challenging. Consequently, pupils make strong progress. Inspectors saw lessons that were designed and then adapted to meet the varying needs and abilities of each of the pupils. Pupils were observed having to think deeply about complex issues or using tools, such as saws, safely and well.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge, and this was evident in their confident teaching, precise use of subject-specific vocabulary, and clear explanations and demonstrations.
- Teachers know pupils very well because they assess their learning and needs accurately. This is supported by moderation within the school and with other special schools, which enables teachers to reliably benchmark their judgements. Leaders plan to extend this to include a mainstream school.
- Behaviour is outstanding, particularly given the complex needs of the pupils. Permanent exclusions have been significantly reduced and there were no permanent exclusions in 2015/16. There have also been substantial reductions in the number of fixed-term exclusions because of the highly effective support that staff provide to pupils and their families. However, you recognise that exclusions can be reduced further. Similarly, leaders are committed to reducing the number of physical interventions. You recognise that an important strategy in doing so is to sharpen further your effective monitoring and evaluation to identify triggers and patterns.
- Pupils behave very well at breaktimes and lunchtimes, given their individual needs. They interact well together, such as when a group were negotiating the rules to a ball game. Staff provide highly effective supervision, which is low-key and gives the pupils a sense of responsibility for their own behaviour.
- Staff also model positive behaviours to pupils very well, for example how to listen and discuss with each other in lessons or how to share a meal at lunchtime.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- monitoring and evaluation is refined and sharpened so that all factors and triggers are identified and addressed to further improve the behaviour and attendance of pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools

commissioner and the director of children's services for Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Derek Myers
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, senior leaders, the officer responsible for the single central record, the attendance leader, the behaviour leader, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and the head of Maplefields Teaching School Alliance. Inspectors also met with members of staff and considered the responses to the staff survey. We reviewed a range of school documentation. Inspectors visited classrooms and learning areas to observe teaching, talk with pupils and look at their work. Inspectors evaluated information about pupils' progress and attendance. Inspectors observed and talked with pupils in their classes. Inspectors met with you and the 'extended team' leader and reviewed your systems and processes relating to safeguarding. Inspectors met with a number of parents at the beginning of the school day and considered their views alongside the responses from Parent View. Inspectors also reviewed the school's website.

During the inspection I followed three lines of enquiry:

- Is safeguarding effective?
- Have leaders effectively addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection?
- So pupils make outstanding progress from their starting points, given their needs?