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1 December 2016

Mrs Alison Beane  
Executive Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Beane

### **Short inspection of Mary Rose Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 1 November 2016 with Julie Sackett, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be outstanding in October 2013.

### **This school continues to be outstanding.**

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your continuing drive, commitment and passion for the school to provide the best possible care and education for the pupils have ensured that they thrive and make excellent progress.

The school's aim to provide a rich and exciting curriculum is visible in the range of activities pupils experience. Leaders and staff successfully identify opportunities for pupils to succeed alongside other schools, whether special or mainstream. This was evident in the 'Rock Challenge' dance competition, where pupils reached the regional finals and won the short film award.

Parents rightly recognise and value all that you and the staff do to ensure that pupils flourish within the warm and caring ethos. Parents say that staff 'go above and beyond' to help pupils. They also comment that everyone is approachable, so they can raise concerns easily, but that, more often, staff contact them first. This effective two-way communication ensures that everyone works successfully together, so pupils are very well supported.

Staff take great care to treat pupils respectfully. They take great account of pupils' enjoyment and interest in activities. When pupils are enjoying and participating,

staff make the most of learning opportunities; when pupils are less motivated or unable to concentrate, staff make sensible judgements and adapt the timetable to meet pupils' needs. Consequently, very good use is made of learning time and pupils remain keen to learn.

Reading was an area which leaders identified for further improvement. Although outcomes are consistently high, leaders recognised that, for some, reading was not an enjoyable activity, so those pupils did not learn as much as they could. Across the school, staff sought ways to make reading fun. For example, they linked reading to climbing by sticking words, letters and symbols to a climbing wall, for pupils to collect and use in their reading activities. The enthusiasm created by this activity has spilled over into other reading activities and pupils are now making even more progress in their reading.

At the last inspection, it was identified that the teaching of shape, space and measure was not as practical as it could be to enable pupils to explore and understand for themselves. Leaders took effective action and teaching in this area is now as strong as in other mathematical concepts.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

School leaders and governors do all they can to ensure that pupils are safe. All appropriate staff checks are carried out and the safeguarding processes are monitored carefully by leaders and governors. Staff are trained appropriately; they record concerns rigorously and fulfil their responsibilities for keeping pupils safe.

The electronic system for recording and sharing information enables all safeguarding leads to be fully informed and take action if required. The school makes referrals when necessary and works very effectively with outside agencies to ensure the best outcome for pupils and their families.

### **Inspection findings**

- You and the leadership team actively seek ways to become more effective. You strive for the school to be the very best. Your high expectations ensure that all who work at the school understand, and sign up to, your vision for excellence. Consequently, staff consistently display high-quality skills and a determination to improve further.
- Since the last inspection, the school has become a teaching school, been commissioned by Portsmouth to provide advice and support to other schools and become the sponsoring academy for a multi-academy trust with two other schools. All of these reflect leaders' commitment to working supportively with other settings, sharing their expertise and gathering ideas to use in school.
- Leaders recognise that research and innovation are essential for the school to continue its journey of improvement. Consequently, staff are supported strongly to participate in training, which develops their skills while providing opportunities

to explore current thinking. An example of this is the recent introduction of 'sensory circuits'. These are the individual routines which pupils with autistic spectrum conditions follow so they are more ready to learn. Although in the early stages, anecdotal feedback from staff is that pupils are much more prepared and making faster progress.

- Governors share leaders' ambition for the school and are supportive of leaders' work, while providing appropriate and useful challenge. They know their roles and the school very well. They plan strategically for both the school and themselves to become more effective. For example, governors identified that parents did not know them or have regular opportunities to speak to them. Consequently, they now attend parent events, such as the monthly coffee morning, which they find really useful for gathering parents' views.
- Teaching is outstanding across the school. Teachers and teaching assistants carefully record what pupils can do in each lesson and over time. Together, they plan the next steps so that activities meet pupils' specific needs precisely. Tasks involve hands-on learning, so pupils explore at their own pace, improve their handling skills and coordination, and develop their particular methods of communication. All groups of pupils do as well as each other, including disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupils make very good progress and achieve extremely well in their personal skills and academic skills. Photographic evidence, supported by written comments, makes it clear when pupils make progress. Leaders work with teaching staff to set challenging targets for individuals and check throughout the year whether pupils are on track to meet their targets. If pupils appear to be falling behind, additional support is put in place to ensure that they catch up to where they were predicted to be. In all subjects, approximately a fifth of pupils achieve more than expected.
- Leaders have recently devised a system by which they can assess progress in other areas, such as personal care, resilience and communication. This reflects the high priority the school places on developing the whole child and enabling them to thrive in their future lives.
- The early years provision meets children's needs extremely well. The high levels of care and support, along with the fun activities and effective teaching, ensure that pupils are happy and make progress. They play for a sustained period, carefully supported by an adult to encourage them to extend their learning further.
- The curriculum is rich and varied. Staff make the most of every opportunity to provide pupils with fun and relevant experiences. They look for ways to fulfil the school's vision of pupils being 'filled with awe and wonder' and able to solve problems and become as independent as possible. Making choices and communicating effectively are fundamental skills which the curriculum supports very well. For example, older pupils select which sports they pursue.

- Pupils benefit greatly from the water sports hub and the expertise of staff, which has led to the school being a specialist sports college. Adapted equipment and very effective teaching enable pupils to develop their skills and participate in a range of sports. When asked their favourite lesson, pupils listed dancing, archery, judo and swimming. It was delightful to see the enjoyment of key stage 1 pupils in their swimming lesson. Pupils also recently participated in a sponsored walk, considering the impact of exercise on their health and well-being.
- The 16 to 19 study programmes meet learners' needs very effectively. Learners are involved in making decisions about the school, for example the décor, and participate in activities which build on their life skills and confidence. Learners helped to decorate the rooms they use and they regularly prepare their own lunch. During the visit, inspectors observed learners putting their jacket potatoes in the oven and chopping salad so that their lunch would be ready when they returned from morning activities. The school's strong links with the local community enable learners to carry out appropriate work experience, such as working in nearby shops and cafes.
- Careers advice is very strong and is adapted to meet pupils' needs. The adviser from Portsmouth authority meets learners to review their needs and interests. She meets with parents and links with colleges to ensure that learners get the best possible transition and support, whether in further education or bespoke social care. No learners leave the school without a plan for what comes next. Although leaders informally track learners' destinations, they do not systematically record and analyse what happens to pupils after they leave. This means that opportunities to review and amend their provision are missed.
- Behaviour is excellent and very well managed by staff. The 'bubble ethos', which is followed by all staff, ensures that positive strategies are consistently used to get the best possible response from pupils. Staff are adept at identifying signs that pupils are struggling to cope and take pre-emptive action so that the school remains a calm and enjoyable place to be. When pupils do require time out, this is managed skilfully and respectfully so that, at all times, pupils retain a sense of responsibility and control.
- Pupils enjoy breaktime and it is managed very well. Staff lead activities such as follow-my-leader and going through 'tunnels' so that all pupils who wish to can participate at the appropriate level for them. Pupils interact well, demonstrating respect and care for one another.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that the destinations of post-19 pupils are recorded and followed up systematically.

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

Yours sincerely

Louise Adams  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

We met with you, the head of school, assistant headteachers and other leaders. With school leaders, we visited classes, where we observed teaching and pupils' work in their assessment files. I met the chair of the governing body, who is also the safeguarding governor. The team inspector spoke to a group of pupils to explore their opinions. The views of parents were gathered through telephone conversations and the 22 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View. The 69 responses to the staff questionnaire were also considered. We analysed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, information about pupils' progress and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures.

During the inspection, we particularly took account of how well pupils are kept safe and cared for, the effectiveness of leadership, whether outcomes remain outstanding, how well the 16 to 19 programmes meet pupils' needs and whether the curriculum enables all pupils to succeed.