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1 December 2016

Mrs Jane Cooper  
Cherry Tree Learning Centre  
Overfield Road  
Russell's Hall Estate  
Dudley  
West Midlands  
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Dear Mrs Cooper

### **Short inspection of Cherry Tree Learning Centre**

Following my visit to the school on 22 November 2016 with Sarah Ashley, 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 June 2013.

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

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Cherry Tree Learning Centre is a welcoming environment, where pupils work cooperatively and learn and do well in the vast majority of subjects. Your pupils have experienced a disrupted education in the past as a result of medical and/or social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Your staff, medical experts, counsellors and therapists work well together to plan and deliver school and home-based teaching and support programmes that meet pupils' health and learning needs. The support and teaching prepare pupils well for reintegration into mainstream schools.

Since the previous inspection, you have restructured your leadership team. You have one deputy headteacher who has responsibility for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Three other staff have responsibility for whole-school leadership. For example, they lead effectively on transition arrangements, information and communication technology (ICT) and the development of pupils' employability skills. This leadership team makes sure that staff meet pupils' needs and that pupils do well across a range of subjects. There has been low staff turnover and you have forged a cohesive and effective staff team.

You have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection with some success. You track individual pupils' progress and generally use the

information effectively to identify pupils who are not doing well. You have evaluated the progress of the majority of key groups of pupils, for example boys, girls and pupils who are disadvantaged. However, you accept that the tracking and evaluation of the progress of the most able and most-able disadvantaged pupils need to be sharper.

Leaders, teachers and teaching assistants have maintained the good standard of learning and teaching across the school. You judge that there is an increasing proportion of teaching that is outstanding over time. The work seen in pupils' books and the impressive results some pupils achieve during their time at the school support this view. Nearly all pupils in key stage 3 are making the progress expected of them in most subjects. Key stage 4 pupils achieve equally as well, particularly in mathematics and ICT. Pupils' progress in mathematics has improved since the previous inspection. Despite a disrupted education, a large majority of Year 11 pupils in 2016 achieved five passes at A\* to G. Information provided by the school shows that the proportion of pupils who achieve five GCSE passes, including in English and mathematics, at A\* to C grades has increased over the last three years. However, you recognise that pupils need to speed up their progress in English language at key stage 4 and their reading and comprehension skills in key stage 3.

An experienced, knowledgeable and skilled management committee supports you well. This committee has improved and is more effective than at the previous inspection. You and the management committee have a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and are keen to raise standards further. For example, the management committee recognises the improvements in mathematics and English literature and the need to improve pupils' attendance and their progress in English language and reading. You and the management committee share a common understanding of how best to support pupils who have had a disrupted education in mainstream schools and an ambition for the pupils to do well. This makes sure that the school maintains and improves its effective provision.

You use additional local authority funding effectively to support the full range of pupils' needs. You have built and maintained very positive and effective partnerships with other schools in Dudley. This helps with pupils' reintegration into mainstream school settings. For example, you send members of your staff to support pupils during their return to their school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team makes sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You and your staff take the welfare, health and safety of pupils very seriously. You provide staff with relevant and frequent training. This training includes daily child protection and safeguarding updates. The welfare and well-being of every pupil are risk-assessed. As a result, staff are vigilant and alert to pupils' medical or social, emotional and mental health needs. You and your staff intervene quickly, if necessary, and work extremely effectively with outside agencies to support pupils' needs to make sure that they are safe. All of the staff who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire strongly agreed

that pupils are safe at the school. Pupils and parents who spoke with inspectors or who completed Ofsted's questionnaire supported this view.

Members of the management committee have a secure grasp of their duty to safeguard children. They make sure that current government guidance informs the school's policies and procedures and that they are appropriate. For example, a number of leaders and governors have completed safer recruitment training, and the checks on staff's suitability to work with children are thorough and rigorous.

Pupils join and leave the school throughout the year and attend for different periods of time, depending on their needs. Communication with the pupils' parents and 'parent' school is effective and ensures that the level of support is suitable. You check on pupils' absence to make sure that pupils stay in education or are safe when they are not in school.

You and your staff deliver a suitable curriculum to help pupils fully understand the risks and dangers associated with, for example, the use of social media and mobile phones. You and the management committee make sure that school computers have filters and monitoring software to check that staff and pupils use machines appropriately and are safe when online.

### **Inspection findings**

- You and your staff have developed effective working relationships with parents, 'parent' schools and health professionals. You and your staff have a detailed understanding of individual pupils' needs. This enables you to put in place suitable programmes to support pupils' progress and development. Parents and outside agencies comment positively on the impact that the school has on the lives of its pupils and families. They consider the school to be well led and managed. Inspectors agree.
- The large majority of pupils do well socially and academically while at the school, particularly in mathematics, religious education, English literature and computing. You recognise that the most able and most-able disadvantaged pupils need to receive more challenge and stretch in their learning in order to help speed up their progress in subjects across the school.
- Pupils across the school do well in mathematics as a result of the effective teaching they receive. Staff have received suitable training on how to develop pupils' numeracy skills and mathematical understanding. For example, pupils use resources and equipment to explore how mathematics 'works' in order to deepen their understanding.
- Almost all teachers provide written and verbal feedback in line with the school's policy. Pupils told inspectors that this feedback helps them to understand how to advance their learning and progress.
- Staff follow up pupils' absence thoroughly and work with families to stress the importance of good attendance. As a result, most of the pupils improve their previous attendance while at the school. However, the overall school attendance

figure remains significantly below the national average.

- You receive from 'parent' schools a proportion of their pupil premium funding for individual pupils. You use this effectively to make sure that eligible pupils do as well as their classmates. Because there are small numbers of disadvantaged pupils in each year group, it is difficult to compare this group's progress with other pupils nationally.
- Leaders use appropriate systems to track the progress of individual pupils. However, leaders have not routinely evaluated the progress of the most able and most-able disadvantaged pupils. In addition, leaders have not implemented assessment measures that reflect the changes in national assessment procedures at key stage 3.
- You and your staff generally prepare pupils well for reintegration into mainstream settings or for when they leave Cherry Tree Learning Centre. However, you have identified that there has been a recent decline in the number of pupils successfully reintegrated into mainstream schools. You are taking effective action to address this.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced and includes a full range of enrichment activities, including trips and visits. All of the pupils at the school, including those in key stage 3, have effective careers education, information, advice and guidance. As a result, all of the Year 11 pupils leaving the school last year secured places in further education or in employment and training.
- Pupils' behaviour and positive attitudes to learning continue to be a strength of the school.
- The school's website includes the statutory policies for a pupil referral unit. For example, the school's safeguarding policy is thorough, detailed and fully informed by current government guidance. The website also includes useful and relevant information for parents, for example information on how they can help their children stay safe when they use social media.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all teachers use assessment measures that reflect 'assessment without levels' national assessment procedures at key stage 3
- the progress of the most able and most-able disadvantaged pupils is routinely tracked and evaluated so that staff can support this group of pupils to do well across all subjects
- teachers provide sufficient challenge for pupils, including the most able and most-able disadvantaged pupils, so that they can make outstanding progress in all subjects
- pupils' attendance is improved so that the school's overall figure is closer to the national average for mainstream schools

- pupils make quicker progress in English language at key stage 4 and improve their reading skills and their understanding of what they have read at key stage 3.

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

Yours sincerely

Peter Humphries  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this one-day inspection, inspectors were able to discuss the work of the school with you, your leadership team and other staff who teach at the school and provide home and hospital tuition. Inspectors observed pupils' learning in classes and subjects across the school. During these observations, inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke to them about their learning. They were able to hear pupils of different abilities read. Inspectors also spoke informally to pupils about behaviour, attendance, how they learn to keep themselves safe and about what it feels like to be a member of the Cherry Tree Learning Centre community. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour as they arrived at school, at breaks and at lunchtime as well as in lessons. Discussions with two members of the management committee and two representatives from the local authority helped to provide additional information. Inspectors looked at a range of school documents, including the checks on staff's suitability to work with children and the school's information about pupils' progress, attainment and attendance. Inspectors took account of the 21 responses to the staff questionnaire and two replies to the parent questionnaire. There were insufficient responses on Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents) for these to be considered.

From the pre-inspection evaluation of published information and the school's information online, inspectors had four lines of enquiry that they pursued during this inspection. They were:

- pupils' progress from their starting points across the school, particularly that of the most able, disadvantaged and most-able disadvantaged pupils
- how effectively leaders have improved the quality of teaching, assessment and feedback and pupils' progress in mathematics and other subjects
- the management committee's effectiveness in evaluating and improving the provision's success
- how effectively leaders make sure that pupils are safe.