

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



6 December 2016

Lisa Bunn
Acting headteacher
Wells Park School
School Lane
Lambourne Road
Chigwell
Essex
IG7 6NN

Dear Mrs Bunn

Short inspection of Wells Park School

Following my visit to the school on 22 November 2016 with Helen Bailey, 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 June 2012.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Pupils make outstanding progress at Wells Park owing to the exceptional support you give to them and their families throughout their time with you. You and your team use an array of information to accurately identify pupils' starting points. You then create personalised support for each pupil based on this clear understanding of their starting point. Staff make home visits prior to pupils' arrival at the school and therefore are able to ascertain pastoral needs and plan for the support of family circumstances. This work with families continues on arrival at school. Staff work to support parents in engaging with the school, by facilitating attendance at key events such as the 'celebration of Christmas' festival. This ensures that parents continue to feel a valued part of their child's life.

Pupils and parents value highly the support of your staff. Parents are particularly effusive about the excellent communication between home and school. For example, parents and staff make very effective use of your 'chat books'. These books form a method of communication between home, school and residential provision. These books contain comments about the learning during the week, pupils sharing their successes with parents and carers, and where appropriate parents informing the school of their concerns or queries. Staff support pupils to

maintain their strong links with home and are happy to use modern technology to do this. Pupils are able to Skype and Facetime their families and keep up to date with what is happening beyond the boundary of the school. This very important piece of work ensures that pupils remain engaged with their family and maintain the relationships they have at home in readiness for their return to these home environments.

Pupils access a broad range of subjects and activities in which they excel. Your staff use the topic-based curriculum very well to support youngsters to make connections in their learning and to transfer skills between subjects and topics. Within this curriculum, you also develop pupils' sense of awe and wonder at the world around them, and develop their opportunities to learn independently and creatively. For example, a recent discussion with the boys about magical creatures has led to them creating a whole unit of learning around 'discovery'. They are using the woodlands and their understanding of 'clues' to create the evidence of the 'magical fairy community'. Your team uses these opportunities to also engage pupils with their writing. Pupils' high-quality writing about their discovery of 'treasure boxes' give examples of pupils' high levels of engagement. Many pupils say that these opportunities to develop learning around their interests is inspiring them into future careers; for example, their work as reporters has encouraged one towards a career in journalism.

Pupils are remarkably self-motivated to achieve the best that they can. Your staff maintain consistently high expectations about work and conduct, and pupils respect and welcome these values. You and your team use praise as the central motivation for your pupils. The staff's highly consistent application of the token system is just one example of where you use positive reinforcement to improve pupils' behaviour and engagement with learning. Pupils take great delight in checking how many tokens they have earned for their hard work and good behaviour each day. Equally, pupils support one another. For example, their effective questioning of one another has resulted in some exceptional work which demonstrates pupils' increasing independence.

Pupils aspire to be a member of the 'pathways' class. This class is the stepping stone between this school and the transition out into mainstream or other appropriate provision beyond the school. Last year all pupils achieved a suitable next-step in their education, in either mainstream or specialist provision. Staff stay in touch with many of your past pupils to keep a check on how well they are doing in their next provision. You ensure that pupils continue to learn, even in this part of your school. For example, before pupils can begin in the pathways class, they complete an application form and undertake a formal interview. This opportunity teaches pupils to develop a greater sense of responsibility. One pupil who was very excited to have been offered his interview on Friday was quick to share what it was that had made a difference for him and how staff had supported his needs effectively. This provision ensures that almost all pupils are very well prepared to begin their journey back into their next mainstream or special school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements are effective, well managed, fit for purpose and rigorous. Records are detailed and of exceptional quality. All safeguarding-related policies and procedures are in place and meticulously followed. Leaders and governors ensure that the relevant checks are made when employing new staff.

Child protection records are exceptionally well maintained, and staff are truly tenacious in their work to ensure that various agencies support pupils well. Staff act as determined advocates for the pupils they teach and look after, ensuring that pupils' views are heard and that decisions made are in their best interests.

Pupils say they feel safe and are kept safe by staff who care and are thoughtful about pupils' needs and difficulties. Pupils say that there is little bullying in the school and that they are confident any concerns that might arise will be quickly addressed by staff. Pupils could explain very well how they have learned to keep themselves safe. Staff have taught pupils to manage any difficulties that may arise by using a range of appropriate strategies. These have been well rehearsed and so pupils are confident that they can use them if necessary.

Pupils can explain how 'brilliantly' staff teach them to keep themselves safe, help others stay safe and consider the safety of those around them. Pupils also have a good knowledge about staying safe on the internet. Pupils are taught and encouraged to self-regulate their behaviours. They are involved in the risk assessing of trips and visits so that they too have a clear understanding of what the risks are and how they can be supported to manage them.

Your staff are meticulous in how they maintain records and administer medications for pupils. The policy for this provides a clear guide to your staff about the expectations on this, and your systematic approach ensures that pupils are always given the right medication, in the right dose, at the right time.

While safeguarding processes and systems are exemplary in how they keep pupils safe, the policy around safeguarding does not reflect the extraordinary practice that goes on in the school. You acknowledge that your policy, while compliant, is not an accurate reflection of the strengths and unique provision that you offer.

Inspection findings

- You and your team, as well as governors, know the school well. The school's detailed and accurate self-assessment reflects well the strengths of the school. The self-evaluation also accurately highlights the appropriate areas for improvement.
- Your team measure progress for a child in a variety of different areas, including their social and academic skills as well as their levels of engagement. This holistic assessment approach ensures that the whole child matters.

- Pupils are taught to be ready for their life in modern Britain. You have created a curriculum whereby pupils understand how to be positive citizens in a community. You use the house system to develop relationships between pupils based on respect, tolerance and equality. Pupils enjoy this sense of community and build positive relationships with each other quickly.
- Pupils are prepared well for the next step in their education. They leave ready to continue learning. Pupils say that they enjoy their time at Wells Park but know it is a stepping stone for the rest of their lives. These positive attitudes are reflected in all that pupils do during their time in the school and can be seen in the high-quality displays of their work. Pupils are proud of what they achieve.
- Since the previous inspection, the range of developments that have been made is wide and continually expanding. Leaders, governors, staff and pupils are ambitious. The staffs' determined approach and high expectations for pupils and outcomes has resulted in a community which rightly places value on effort and success. This is a school where children succeed.
- Pupils make consistently good or better progress from their various starting points. There are no differences in progress apparent between groups. The high-quality and accurate assessment information which staff gather when pupils arrive at Wells Park ensures that their starting points are well understood. As a result, strategies to help pupils learn are put in place quickly and time is used well.
- Governance has continued to improve and strengthen. The much improved membership of the governing body now has a wide and diverse set of skills. As a result governors are able to challenge well but also have an excellent understanding of the range of needs of their pupils.
- Governors have confidence in the appointment of the new headteacher who joins the school in January. They are delighted that you will be staying as deputy headteacher and feel that this strong team will take the school forward. As a result of their proactive work, staff too have confidence in the direction of the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- policies reflect the unique and outstanding practice in the school, particularly in safeguarding
- the positive practice of the school is shared more widely with other provisions, ensuring a continuing path of development.

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

Yours sincerely

Mary Rayner
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Our lines of enquiry focused on four things:

- How have leaders and governors maintained the high-quality provision since the last inspection and how have they improved it further?
- What does the curriculum look like and how do leaders know how well pupils are doing from their various starting points?
- How do leaders and staff ensure that pupils are kept safe?
- How do leaders ensure that they involve parents and pupils in the provision?

During the inspection, we spoke with you, the strategic manager, and a range of other staff. We met with four members of the governing body, including the chair. We also spoke to a representative from the local authority. We visited classrooms through observations and learning walks and undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work. We spoke with pupils throughout the day, and heard pupils read.

We took account of the free text messages on Ofsted's online questionnaire from parents, as well as staff responses. We spoke to a number of parents, both face to face and on the telephone. We also scrutinised an array of school documentation, including information related to safeguarding and progress.