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Miss Elaine Everett and Mr Clive Rockliff
Headteachers
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Dear Miss Everett and Mr Rockliff

Short inspection of Seven Hills School

Following my visit to the school on 25 January 2017 with Chris Campbell, 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 January 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 highly successful partnership as joint leaders has been the key to the strong progress the school has made since the previous inspection. Your equal and shared approach to headship has enabled you to be highly effective at continuing to improve the quality of teaching and learning and outcomes for pupils across the school. You have built a cohesive senior leadership team who lead by example. Staff morale is very high, as evidenced by your recent staff survey and through discussions with staff during the inspection. Their appreciation and confidence in your leadership is very clear.

Both of you know your school exceptionally well and are passionate in your view that the school needs to provide the very best it can for all its pupils. Your clear understanding of the differing needs of each pupil in your care has enabled you to ensure that provision matches the needs of individual pupils very closely. As a result, pupils make excellent progress overall.

Your astute observations help you to identify the needs of your pupils. For example, more able Year 11 pupils often transfer to City College at the end of Year 11. In order to prepare them for a successful transition, they are currently taught for three days per week at the college by school staff. This enables them to complete the myriad useful accreditations that they undertake in key stage 4 with staff who know and understand their needs. At the same time, pupils get used to the excitement

and challenges of a college environment. This ensures that pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education and training.

You are facing with thoughtful ingenuity the challenge to the school of an increase in the number of pupils. The very close links you have forged with outside organisations such as the Sheaf Centre have enabled you to take a creative approach to the education of students who attend the sixth form. While much of their education takes place in school, the life-skills curriculum is delivered at the centre. Pupils enjoy learning how to look after themselves and skills, such as using a sharp knife to cut up an onion, enable them to develop independence and skills for life after school.

Teachers and support staff work closely together. Work planned for pupils matches their needs closely and accurately. Whole-school theme days enable staff to develop pupils' interests and understanding by focusing on one topic. For example on the day of the inspection, the curriculum was devoted to religious education (RE). Pupils across the school investigated the circle of life. Younger, more able pupils studied birth and the ceremonies carried out by different religious groups, others prepared for the birth of the baby by making a mobile for a cot. Older pupils demonstrated through dance and drama the pleasure of life and the importance of friendship. Key stage 4 pupils studied the end of life by writing thoughtfully whether they would like to be remembered by a song, a poem or a flower. These skilfully chosen activities enabled pupils of all abilities to develop a greater understanding of birth, life and death in other cultures from across the world.

You have created a very strong ethos across school of the importance of pupils' achievement. Whether it is a small step in communicating a want or need, the completion of a Duke of Edinburgh Award, or a GCSE in English, the progress and attainment of all pupils is celebrated with equal delight and gusto.

The governing body support your current plans wholeheartedly and are exceptionally proud of the achievement of pupils who attend. Their support for the school is unwavering. Governors' understanding of the needs of pupils is comprehensive. They make a valuable contribution to school improvement and offer informed challenge to you and the leadership team. The governing body are motivated and dynamic and are keen that all governors should play an active part in leading the school forward.

Pupils are well-informed and keen ambassadors for the school. They are confident young people who want their opinions to be heard. The school shares the site with a Roman Catholic secondary school. Pupils socialise at lunchtime, eating together where appropriate and sharing the same playground. Your pupils are proud of their achievements and many are confident in the melee of a senior school playground. Pupils' view of school was overwhelmingly positive. Their delight at attending is palpable. Peer mentors wear their red jackets and baseball caps with pride. They feel their training has been invaluable to enable them to carry out their role of befriending anyone who is lonely and to make sure 'no one gets too angry'.

Parents spoken to during the inspection commented on how well their children settle into school life and how happy they are to attend. Comments from the school's own questionnaire describe how happy parents are with their children's care and education.

Safeguarding is effective.

Through regular updates in weekly meetings and a rigorous training schedule, you have ensured that staff are aware that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Staff say they are very clear about who to turn to should they have a safeguarding concern. They are also clear about the requirements laid out in new safeguarding documentation.

Safeguarding records are focused, stored in chronological order and reflect excellent multi-professional discussion and actions. Records show that medicines are administered safely by well-trained staff.

A scrutiny of staff files carried out during the inspection shows that you adhere very closely to national guidance on safer recruitment practices. Risk assessments are rigorously carried out both in school and for off-site provision. The safeguarding governor carries out regular checks on safeguarding practice within school. Pupils spoken to said they felt very safe and happy in school. The rigour that you apply to all the required checks, combined with your very clear focus on ensuring that safeguarding practice is woven through all that you do, has enabled you to provide a very safe and caring ethos within school.

Inspection findings

- Pupils who attend the school have a broad range of abilities. Many have a very high level of need. The school takes a bespoke approach to meeting pupils' individual needs. For example, pupils are grouped within their phase according to their ability and individual needs. This ensures that all groups, including the more able, make good and better progress over time. This is clearly evidenced by the many and varied qualifications and accreditations achieved by pupils.
- Pupils enjoy a wide and varied curriculum which is regularly enriched by visitors and visits away from school. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their skills in dance and drama, for example. Pupils have taken part in a range of dance events and some have performed with a nationally acclaimed dance group. Staff leaders and governors were particularly pleased when pupils recently publicly performed scenes from Shakespeare's 'As You Like It' as part of Sheffield schools' Shakespeare festival.
- Experiences such as these enable pupils to develop their self-esteem, self-worth and confidence in their ability to succeed in school and beyond.
- The previous inspection report asked school leaders to provide more opportunities for pupils to judge how well they have learned and how to improve their work. Discussions with more able pupils about their work demonstrated clearly that they knew what they had learned and through the use of icons, such as smiley faces, could feed back whether they had understood.

- Pupils' reading skills are well developed and many are keen to improve them further. School leaders recognise this and have ensured ready access to the well-stocked school library, often at breaks and lunchtime. School data clearly shows that pupils make very strong progress in reading and this has also improved pupils' writing skills.
- Whole-school mathematics days enable pupils across the school to develop a better understanding of how to use the skills they have learned to solve practical problems. Pupils' infectious enthusiasm for learning can clearly be seen in all that they do and work in pupils' books shows that they make equally strong progress in mathematics and English.
- Many pupils have medical needs. Some spend long periods of time in hospital. This can impact on their attendance levels. However, a very small number of pupils do not have medical needs but still have lower attendance levels. School leaders are aware of this and have recently begun to work with an attendance officer. However, the impact of this work has yet to be felt and, while overall attendance is close to the national average for secondary schools, further improvement is possible.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that strategies identified through partnership work carried out by school leaders and the attendance officer are put into effect as soon as possible.

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

Yours sincerely

Marian Thomas
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors examined a range of documents. These included safeguarding documents and the school's data on measuring pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour. Meetings were held with four members of the governing body including the chair of the governing body, members of staff and senior leaders. Informal meetings were held with parents and pupils.

Accompanied by senior leaders, I observed learning in classes across the school and looked at work in pupils' books. The team inspector observed learning at City College and the Sheaf Centre.