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Mr Neil Toplass
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Dear Mr Toplass

Short inspection of Shenstone Lodge School

Following my visit to the school on 3 May 2017 with Simon Mosley, Her Majesty's 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 November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in Shenstone Lodge and The Brades Lodge since the last inspection. Your school motto, 'Safe, happy learning', encapsulates the strong ethos and culture that you, governors and leaders foster and promote to everyone's benefit. You have developed a well-structured, cohesive leadership team across both sites and you all work tirelessly to improve the quality of education for pupils at the school. You and your team recognise that there is still work to do, but you have secured firm foundations on which to develop further the good practice that is evident.

School records show that behaviour on both sites is good and this was also true on the day of the inspection. When pupils do experience difficulties in managing their behaviour, they are supported well by capable staff. Pupils are looked after and helped to resolve their problems. The vast majority of parents are very positive about the school. They see improvements in behaviour at home as a result of the support that has been given to their child at school. Parents say that the school communicates well with them and they can see their children making progress. Parents with whom inspectors spoke said that they would recommend the school to other parents; one mirrored the views of others when she said, in reference to her child, that the school 'knows how to get the best out of him'.

Governors are committed to the school and have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They actively look for ways to improve their practice; for

example, governors have worked with the school's improvement adviser to enable them to monitor the quality of teaching and learning more effectively. They have initiated external peer reviews so that they can compare the practice of the school with similar schools. Governors have commissioned a review of governance in order to identify areas where they can build on their existing strengths. They know where pupil premium and other catch-up funding is used in the school and they make sure that they find out how this has made a difference to pupils. While governors challenge leaders regularly about practice in the school, they are not yet presented with a wide enough range of school performance information. This limits their ability to make sure that both the school's self-evaluation and subsequent development plan are focused sharply on areas for improvement.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified that pupils needed more personalised targets in order to accelerate their learning and to encourage them to work both collaboratively and independently. In most cases, teachers now use accurate baseline information to make sure that activities are closely matched to pupils' abilities. However, this is not yet consistent practice across the school. Inspectors saw pupils working together, helping and coaching each other in their learning, in calm environments. Pupils are supported well by other adults in class and around the school. The strong team ethos was evident on the day of the inspection. The subject leader for mathematics has introduced regular 'pit stops' for pupils, several times a week. These are tasks which pupils have to complete independently. It enables teachers to see if pupils have learned the concepts they have been taught or whether they need additional help. Pupils clearly feel safe and confident to be able to talk about their learning. Comments pupils wrote in their books such as, 'I feel I can do this, I just need a bit more practice,' reflect pupils' resilience and honesty.

Leaders have taken effective action to reduce fixed-term exclusions and improve attendance. Attendance is still not in line with the national average but you continue to look for ways to encourage pupils to attend regularly. The well-being team follows up absences immediately. Leaders know the small group of pupils who are persistently absent and are targeting work to address this. In extreme cases, you are prepared to take legal action which can result in prosecutions.

Leaders have developed an assessment system which provides detailed, individualised information about the progress that each pupil is making in the core curriculum. Leaders are able to analyse the performance of different groups, including children looked after and those in receipt of pupil premium funding. This information is shared with governors so that they can see which pupils are performing well and which need additional support. However, you do not routinely analyse how well pupils are performing in relation to their key stage. As a result, you cannot yet identify any trends in information; for example, you are not able to see if key stage 3 pupils at Shenstone Lodge are making the same progress as key stage 3 pupils at Brades Lodge.

Safeguarding is effective.

All staff have a demonstrable commitment to all aspects of safeguarding. The school's well-maintained safeguarding records show that staff are suitably checked before being appointed. Governors and senior leaders have completed safer recruitment training. Leaders have made sure that staff at both sites are well trained, receive regular updates and are supported in all aspects of safeguarding. As a result, staff are vigilant to signs of concern about pupils. Systems for recording and reporting concerns are monitored closely by the designated safeguarding lead and her deputies across both sites. Issues raised are dealt with in a timely way and external agencies are engaged where appropriate. Pupil files are well organised and up to date.

Pupils are safe at this school and they told inspectors that staff keep them safe. You and your staff make sure that safeguarding is woven into your daily practice. There is a strong emphasis on the development of healthy relationships in the school; this is reflected in the way staff and pupils work together. Pupils who come to your school have often experienced difficulties early on in their lives and you and your staff work hard to build relationships based on mutual trust and respect. Leaders have developed a range of strategies and safe spaces for pupils to use, such as the well-being room at Shenstone Lodge and rooms 5 and 10 at Brades Lodge. Pupils know that they can take themselves to these safe areas to calm down, or receive additional support from staff if they are not ready to learn in the classroom. Pupils spoke positively about these areas; they are used purposefully and not as a way for pupils to opt out of learning. As one pupil explained and others agreed, 'If you're having a bad day, you still have to do your work but you get more time to do it.'

Leaders and governors have rightly placed a strong emphasis on pupil and staff well-being. Since the last inspection, the school has been awarded the well-being charter mark and you all continue to build on this good practice. This has had a positive impact on the way pupils and staff are developing their resilience in what can be a challenging work environment. You and the other leaders have made sure that staff are able to access high-quality training opportunities. For example, you have used additional funding to good effect to engage a senior educational psychologist in mental health. Leaders have ensured that training and support is specifically tailored to meet the needs of pupils and staff. As a result, staff are better placed to be able to pre-empt any difficulties a pupil may be facing and they can make sure that the pupil receives the right amount of support or intervention.

On some occasions, staff need to physically intervene to keep pupils safe in and around school. Leaders have ensured that all staff have received appropriate training and support to enable them to carry out physical interventions in a safe way, and only as a last resort. Records show detailed accounts of interventions and regular monitoring of these interventions. Leaders use this information to refine and improve good practice in this area. Staff make sure that pupils are supported appropriately in times of crisis, and this is having a positive impact on the frequency of use of physical interventions. Records show that there is an overall downward trend in the use of physical interventions. This academic year, the number of

interventions has dropped by 50% and the use of ground holds by over 75%.

The curriculum enables pupils to learn about how to stay safe in all areas of their life. They learn about hazards in the home, staying safe on the internet and how to recognise risks in the environment. Pupils at both sites were able to talk about how they are taught to keep themselves safe in all aspects of their life. They said that staff do their best to keep them safe.

Inspection findings

- In 2016, outcomes in writing at key stage 2 did not match those achieved in reading and mathematics. Leaders have now taken effective action to address this. The recently appointed English subject leader has made a positive contribution. Current assessment information and work in books shows improvements in writing and more opportunities for extended writing. Leaders' rigorous systems of monitoring show that you recognise good practice and challenge staff to improve their teaching. You know that, in some cases, work is not yet well matched to pupils' abilities and you are taking steps to address this through coaching and mentoring of teachers.
- Governors and leaders have recognised the need to extend the curriculum in key stages 3 and 4 and, as a result, pupils are now able to access a wider range of examination courses, including GCSE English and mathematics. Pupils in Year 11 will be the first to take these examinations later this year. Pupils can achieve functional skills qualifications, BTECs and entry-level qualifications in a range of subjects. These include science, art, food technology, physical education, land-based studies, humanities and motor mechanics. Leaders have made sure that there is a strong emphasis on personal, social and health education. Work on fundamental British values helps to prepare pupils for living in modern Britain. Pupils from the 'Change Makers' group talked positively about the range of extra-curricular opportunities they are able to take part in, including dance, art and judo clubs. They say that they enjoy taking part in sporting activities against other schools and trying new activities such as Australian rules football.
- Meaningful work-based learning opportunities are enabling pupils to access relevant college courses after leaving school. Leaders make sure that, starting in key stage 3, pupils receive quality information, advice and guidance about future employment opportunities from an independent adviser. As a result, nearly all Year 11 pupils have secured college placements, training or apprenticeships. Information shows that this has been a consistent pattern since the last inspection, but you recognise that some pupils do not always sustain their education and training opportunities. Leaders' on-going work in developing pupils' resilience is helping pupils to be better prepared for the challenges they are likely to face after they leave school.
- Attendance continues to improve but is much higher at Shenstone Lodge than at The Brades Lodge. On the day of the inspection, 90% of pupils were present at Shenstone Lodge. Leaders have recognised that the use of motivating reward systems means that pupils are more likely to attend school regularly. Inspectors saw how the consistent use of 'dojo' points motivated pupils to work hard and

behave well. The weekly celebration of achievements not only rewards pupils with the most points, but also those who are most improved and a 'golden child': a pupil who has demonstrated resilience or kindness to others. It was clear from the celebration that this system is valued by the whole-school community and there was genuine shared delight in seeing pupils being rewarded with an afternoon trip. Staff recognise that the improved, consistent approaches to understanding and managing behaviour have had a direct impact on the reduction of exclusions.

- Leaders and staff accurately assess pupils when they join the school and as a result you have begun to adapt your provision to meet pupils' changing needs more effectively. The forest school provision is one example of how you are delivering the curriculum in a creative way. It provides an alternative way of delivering the English and maths curriculum for younger pupils. While this is a relatively new approach, you are already seeing the benefits, and as a result, you have plans to extend this provision. Inspectors saw how motivated pupils were to work in this way. Pupils talked confidently about their learning and showed how their emergent reading and writing skills were improving.
- Leaders are working in close collaboration with representatives from the local authority to make sure that education, health and care plans meet the specific needs of pupils. Parents are fully involved in developing plans for their child and plans are co-produced to accurately reflect pupils' needs. In the past, some pupils have been placed at Shenstone Lodge School but their statements or plans have not named the school. Leaders are cooperating with the local authority to address this issue.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's assessment system is refined so that progress for groups of pupils in different key stages can be tracked more effectively, allowing governors to challenge this information with greater rigour
- the quality of teaching and learning continues to improve so that all pupils make rapid progress and achieve the best outcomes
- the attendance of all pupils continues to improve and persistent absence is reduced further.

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

Yours sincerely

Deb Jenkins
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and senior leaders to discuss progress since the last inspection, your school's self-evaluation, and to agree key lines of enquiry. In order to explore these areas inspectors:

- met with you, the heads of school of both Shenstone Lodge and The Brades Lodge, assistant headteachers, the safeguarding manager, the well-being team leader and members of the governing body including the chair
- met with the school business manager to review the school's single central record, including sampling of personnel files
- met with the local authority school improvement adviser and the senior educational psychologist employed by the school
- visited the The Brades Lodge site with the head of school
- considered the views of parents expressed in the school's own parent surveys on the school's website, met with groups of parents and talked to a sample of parents on the telephone to discuss their views of the school
- spoke to pupils both formally and informally at both sites about their views of the school
- considered 40 responses to the staff online questionnaire
- scrutinised a range of school documents, including: the school's self-evaluation document; the school's development plan; the school's performance and assessment information; peer reviews; safeguarding documents including behaviour management plans, child protection files, local authority referrals, risk assessments, training records, complaints and pupil education plans for children looked after
- visited lessons across all key stages, accompanied by heads of school
- scrutinised work in books across a range of subjects both in class and separately with senior and middle leaders.

Inspectors were unable to consider the views of parents from Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, as there were insufficient responses. However, they were able to consider free-text responses submitted to Parent View.