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Mrs Samantha Axbey
Headteacher
Malden Oaks PRU
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Dear Mrs Axbey

Short inspection of Malden Oaks PRU

Following my visit to the school on 27 June 2017 with Lori Mackey, 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since the last inspection, you have successfully merged two pupil referral units and established a culture and ethos unique to Malden Oaks School. You have created a nurturing and safe environment that develops pupils' self-esteem and re-engages them in their learning. You believe passionately in equality of opportunity and 'investing in success'. Consequently, you ensure that all pupils have access to the full range of courses and extra-curricular activities on offer, irrespective of their starting points. Your outreach work, 'MOSS' (Malden Oaks Support for Schools), is highly valued by local schools and provides training and a forum for discussion. You have a clear vision for this growing school community and a plan to achieve this. You, your leaders and management committee members are highly evaluative and keen to make continuous improvements. For instance, you are currently reviewing your key stage 3 provision.

You have created a calm and productive learning environment where every pupil is known well and can thrive. You have established clear routines, which enable pupils to organise themselves and quickly settle to their learning. Pupils show respect and tolerance towards each other, staff and visitors. Poor behaviour is rare and pupils explained that any occurrences are dealt with quickly and efficiently. Many pupils' attendance has improved since they started at Malden Oaks. However, you are not

complacent. You and your team know that improving the attendance of some pupils is still a challenge. You are working hard to address some of the reasons why pupils do not attend regularly. Pupils benefit from personalised support, guidance and tuition, which enables them to make good progress from their individual starting points. Pupils value the opportunities to have their say, for instance through the school council. They are enthusiastic about the Malden Oaks mural that is soon to be added to the front of the school. You have established strong links with parents and carers. As one parent said of her daughter, 'Since she moved to the unit, she became much happier, developed positive self-esteem and made great progress with her studies.'

You have utilised the growing internal space to provide well-resourced classrooms and areas for independent learning. Your outdoor education programme is a particular strength and gives pupils opportunities to explore, learn new skills such as canoeing or paddle boarding and work together in a team. However, you accept that outdoor areas at the school need rapid improvement to provide safe and pleasant spaces for pupils to play and socialise.

The members of the management committee are experienced and reflective practitioners. They are proud of the school and knowledgeable about its strengths and the areas that need further development. The management committee members provide appropriate challenge and support and recognise when they need to add further expertise. For example, they have recently appointed new members with a financial background. They share your vision for Malden Oaks School and their skills and expertise will help you to achieve this.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. Checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school are in line with statutory guidance. Your safeguarding team works closely with external agencies and schools to share information and ensure that early help is given where appropriate.

Staff are well trained, vigilant and understand their statutory responsibilities to keep pupils safe. They have a good knowledge of the needs of individual pupils and use this to modify teaching plans or interactions. Staff understand the risks posed by the wider community and are clear about their responsibilities to prevent extremism and radicalisation. They are attentive to observing any changes in pupils' behaviour that might indicate prevalent issues such as self-harming or other mental health concerns.

Pupils receive helpful information on keeping themselves safe and guidance on managing their own behaviours and emotions. High staff-to-pupil ratios mean that pupils have constant access to a trusted adult. Pupils commented positively on the high level of support they receive from staff.

Inspection findings

- Since the previous inspection, you and your leadership team have focused tirelessly on improving the quality of teaching and learning. You have a stable staff of subject experts who provide one-to-one and small group tuition to your pupils. They know each and every pupil and adapt their teaching to take account of individual needs and strengths. This ensures that they can fill any gaps in learning that may have been acquired through sporadic attendance at a previous school. Consequently, pupils make at least good progress from their starting points.
- The 'MOOT' (Malden Oaks Outreach Team) part-time programme has proved very successful for those pupils who are at risk of exclusion and is valued highly by local schools.
- You have recently reviewed the way you deliver the key stage 3 curriculum to provide a more nurturing learning environment to pupils who are often waiting for their special needs assessments to be completed. The aim is to deliver the curriculum through a thematic approach, rather than distinct lessons, and will start in September 2017.
- You and your team are rightly proud of the range of GCSE qualifications that pupils can choose. Pupils arrive with very different academic starting points and a whole range of complex issues that have prevented them from reaching their full potential previously. The majority leave with a number of GCSE passes, with some achieving enough qualifications to start A level courses at local sixth forms and colleges.
- You have fostered good links with local providers of vocational courses and businesses. As a result, pupils have opportunities to undertake work placements and take courses in subjects such as construction, hair and beauty, and motor vehicle maintenance. For many, this ignites an interest, which they then pursue at college. In some cases, pupils begin to build relationships with these providers before they start courses post-16.
- The majority of pupils go on to local colleges and sixth forms to continue their studies. This was identified at the previous inspection as an area for development. You now carefully check that pupils sustain their attendance on these courses. Your vocational curriculum support worker helps pupils effectively with their application to college and work placements and oversees the vocational curriculum.
- Many pupils attend Malden Oaks School because they have been unable to continue their studies at mainstream schools. Sometimes, this is due to their inappropriate behaviour, while sometimes it is to support their emotional and social well-being. Malden Oaks is a small, nurturing environment. For many, the transition to studying at large colleges in the local area is a huge step, emotionally and socially. You have developed a number of initiatives to ease this transfer.
- However, more could be done to prepare pupils for this move on to the next stage of their education and training; in particular, identifying some of the

barriers they might face socially and emotionally and providing strategies for tackling the issues that prevented them from learning at their previous school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and the management committee should ensure that:

- action is taken to improve the outdoor areas at the school, in order to provide a safe and pleasant environment for pupils to socialise
- they continue to review the key stage 3 provision to ensure that it meets the needs of the changing intake of pupils
- they continue to focus on strategies to prepare pupils for the next stage of their education and training to ensure that pupils have the necessary skills and resilience to study away from Malden Oaks School.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the management committee, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Kingston upon Thames. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Helen Matthews

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, other senior leaders and teachers. They met with the chair of the management committee and another member. They also met with the school's adviser. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, curriculum information, referrals to external agencies and the register of checks made on staff. Inspectors visited lessons with senior leaders to gather evidence on particular strands of teaching, learning and assessment. They spoke to pupils. Inspectors looked in detail at the progress of pupils through their work and assessment records. Inspectors took account of the three responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View, and the 24 responses to the staff questionnaire. No pupils responded to the questionnaire.