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Mrs Jackie Partridge
Springwell School
Hinkler Road
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Dear Mrs Partridge

Short inspection of Springwell School

Following my visit to the school on 13 July 2017 with Simon Yates, 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Your dynamic drive has created a culture of continuing excellence where committed staff have the highest aspirations for pupils. You and the staffing team have succeeded in meeting the school's aim of providing an 'aspirational learning community which enables pupils and families to succeed'.

Since the previous inspection the school's reputation has continued to grow. Your role as a national leader of education supporting special and mainstream schools has also expanded. Springwell leads the teaching school alliance called the Southampton Inclusion Partnership. Additionally, the school disseminates best practice by leading support within the Southampton Advisory Outreach Service.

The recent ongoing expansion programme is being managed very effectively. It has not distracted staff from their primary aim of helping pupils to make outstanding progress. Those pupils currently educated in the four off-site classes receive the same high-quality support that enables them to flourish and make rapid progress.

Parents are delighted with the school. They say that since joining the school their children have rapidly grown in confidence and thoroughly enjoy the exciting experiences that are provided. Parents are particularly pleased with the care and support given by staff. Typical comments included: 'staff are fantastic', 'they give 200% every day' and 'they have made a spectacular difference to our lives'. Parents

appreciate that staff share their expertise and offer guidance on the successful approaches that are used in school so that they can use them at home.

The only area for improvement identified at the last inspection, regarding provision for information technology, has been addressed with characteristic thoroughness. You are currently implementing a new assessment system which, in addition to tracking academic achievement, is soon to include the tracking of pupils' personal development.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff are unstinting in their efforts to make sure that pupils feel safe and secure. They know the pupils exceptionally well. Leaders and managers have ensured that staff are well trained so that they have a full understanding of the complexities of different pupils' needs. Parents praise staff for their consistent and calm approach when responding to their children's challenging behaviours or anxieties. They say that this contributes to the school having a feeling of a happy and nurturing environment where their children thrive.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Any concerns about pupils' welfare are rapidly addressed, including referrals to the local authority. Systems and records that check the suitability of staff are meticulously maintained.

Inspection findings

- It is evident that leadership has been pivotal in driving forward outstanding practice. All staff are passionate about providing the best for pupils. Staff development is a high priority and 'second-best' is never good enough. New staff learn from expertise within the team so that they can quickly be an asset to the school. All staff who responded to the questionnaire said that they value being part of such an effective team. Many spoke of their commitment to the school and their delight when they see pupils achieving success.
- Governors share senior leaders' vision for the school, and work hard to provide clear strategic leadership. They are well trained and have expertise in a broad range of specialisms, including both social services and education. Governing body minutes show that they have overseen successfully the major expansion of the school. They have also provided appropriate support and challenge to leaders on all aspects of school life.
- We agreed to focus on the progress and attendance of disadvantaged pupils. Additional funding for these pupils is exceptionally well spent. This has ensured that disadvantaged pupils attend well and make outstanding progress. Initiatives such as specialist clubs ensure that these pupils receive the help they need to address any barriers to their learning.
- We agreed to explore the impact of the curriculum on pupils' progress and personal development. Your school provides a rich and varied range of subjects

that are presented in a way that often fascinates pupils. Learning is carefully planned to capture pupils' imagination. This is particularly the case for those who have difficulties in maintaining concentration. Initiatives you have developed to help pupils focus their attention are highly effective. Subjects such as English and mathematics are presented in a myriad of ways that include singing, dancing and art. Extra-curricular activities, such as residential trips, make a positive contribution towards pupils' growing independence. Roles, including membership of the school council, enable pupils to develop their self-confidence.

- The school provides an effective range of therapies that have a positive effect on pupils' well-being. The well-equipped sensory rooms allow pupils to explore their visual and tactile senses. The hydrotherapy pool is well used to help pupils strengthen their bodies and develop weak muscle groups. The on-site therapy dog is warm and loving; he calms anxious pupils and is adored by all.
- Finally, we decided to check how well pupils are progressing. Books and photographic journals show that pupils, including the most able, make outstanding progress from their starting points. Pupils make excellent progress in developing their communication skills. In the last year almost every pupil has developed stronger skills in their preferred method of communication. This has the impact of reducing the level of frustration that some pupils feel. Nearly half of the pupils in the school have acquired verbal skills in the last year. A typical comment from parents was that their child started in September as non-verbal and now they, 'can't shut them up!'
- Children in the two off-site early years classes make exceptional progress because teachers know their abilities very well. Challenging targets are set and work is planned to help them achieve success. Pupils in the other two off-site classes also do exceptionally well. Where appropriate, these pupils work some of the time alongside mainstream classmates.
- The views and wishes of pupils, as stated in their education, health and care plans, are taken very seriously by the school. They are clearly incorporated into the planning for each pupil.
- All pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. This is because of the school's careful transition programme that takes into account pupils' possible concerns and anxieties.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the tracking of pupils' personal development is fully incorporated within the school's new assessment procedures.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Southampton. This letter

will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Liz Bowes
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, meetings were held with you; members of your senior leadership team; governors, including the chair of the governing body; and a representative from the local authority. Discussions were also held with pupils. The four off-site classes were visited. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day and took into consideration 17 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. Inspectors, with members of the senior leadership team, visited all the classes and looked at pupils' books and photographic records. Views expressed by 97 staff who had responded to the staff survey were also considered. A range of school documentation was reviewed, including: leaders' evaluation of the school's performance and plans for improvement; assessment, behaviour and exclusions information; the single central record of employment checks on staff; relevant policies and procedures; and minutes of governors' meetings.