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Dear Miss Cliffe

Short inspection of The Meadows Sports College

Following my visit to the school on 19 September 2017 with Ofsted Inspector Sarah Ashley, 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Under your headship the school has started on a new journey which is both exciting and challenging to everyone in school. It is clear that in some areas of school life this journey is only beginning. There is still a lot of work to establish, trial and test some of the changes you would like to see to make this school as good as you believe it can be. Since joining the school in September 2016, you have worked hard to establish an ethos based upon moral leadership. You put every pupil at the heart of the school's work. This has involved making some difficult decisions over the past year. You have strengthened both senior and middle leadership teams by developing staff and promoting them to take on positions of responsibility. This restructure should be complete with the anticipated appointments of senior leaders who should strengthen your team.

You have assessed the progress made towards the areas for improvement found at the last inspection. Your evaluation of the school's current performance is accurate. You identified what actions you need to take to secure further and continuous improvement. You have put in place thoughtful provision and plans. These focus on a personalised curriculum for every pupil. This work is having a significant impact on pupils' learning and outcomes in all curriculum areas.

You have developed a staff team that works hard to improve pupils' learning. Staff

appreciate the impact and value of the work you have carried out. Staff say they feel far more able to gear learning to the needs of pupils so that they can expand their knowledge and skills. Staff are prepared to take risks and try new ideas with the aim of doing the very best for their pupils. You have put in place an effective model for checking the work of staff. This includes regular pupil progress meetings. You set high expectations for staff and pupils. As a result, staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and pupils are making good progress from their starting points. This is contributing well to addressing the areas for development identified in the last inspection and to bringing about further improvement.

An increasing number of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) who have challenging difficulties have recently joined the school. This has provided challenges for the school which you have addressed successfully by providing a very disciplined, well-planned environment which supports all pupils' learning. You and other leaders have worked together to develop a curriculum which enables every pupil to learn at their own pace. Pupils make good progress and achieve success. However, school assessment procedures are not yet developed well enough to provide good information for leaders and class teachers. Teachers have redesigned the facilities within the school sensitively and thoughtfully to support pupils' individual development and learning.

The curriculum is being developed to meet the needs, abilities, interests and aspirations of all pupils. Pupils enjoy a wide range of enrichment experiences. You have given careful thought to the best ways to introduce new pupils, especially those with very complex needs. You and your senior leaders have taken time to look at best practice from other schools while considering what is best for the pupils at The Meadows. School leaders spoke passionately about what they are intending to develop, especially for students in the sixth form. You are currently improving the curriculum for students in that stage.

Personal, social and emotional development is well catered for and can be seen throughout the curriculum. Staff often identify very precise small steps which pupils are working on every day to improve their levels of self-help and independence. Lessons are delivered effectively by teachers and teaching assistants. They know their pupils well and understand their needs.

Pupils' behaviour at all times is very good. This creates a positive and supportive learning environment. Pupils are always ready to try their best. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe and that behaviour in their school is very good. They have liked being able to offer their own ideas on changes to the playground. They also enthused about a range of activities they enjoy at school, and about the support they receive from their teachers. Staff use de-escalation techniques to support pupils in developing positive behaviours. The decrease in the number of behaviour incidents over the past year shows the strength of the very positive relationships between staff and pupils. You have provided staff training on a range of special educational needs that has helped staff to identify more accurately pupils' needs. As a result, the support pupils receive is more suitable to their needs and helps improve their behaviour and attitudes to learning. Pupils told inspectors that

staff deal with the rare bullying incidents straight away.

Parents are happy with the quality of education provided for their children and the level of care from the staff. They spoke positively about the school. They believe the school meets their children's often very complex needs. They feel that their children make very good progress towards clear objectives. The school shares information with them. Several parents commented on how responsive the school has been to any concerns.

Governors are very clear about what the school's strengths are and the impact of the work you have already started. They described the new approach to the curriculum in focusing on a more personalised delivery as a 'breath of fresh air'. They have taken action to meet with the local authority and come up with a plan to ensure that all education, health and care plans will be reviewed. They are realistic about what the school needs to do to improve further. They are confident that school leaders will have the capacity to take the school forward.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff in all areas of the school are very clear that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Keeping children safe is integral to all the work of the school. Safeguarding policies and procedures are secure. There are appropriate procedures in place to ensure that staff register any concerns. School leaders follow these up and, where necessary, have been forceful in ensuring that they are escalated to external agencies. When there have been safeguarding incidents, the school's leaders have followed its own and the local authority's procedures to the letter.

Staff receive appropriate training and are certain what their responsibilities are. They understand who to go to and what to report, and know that concerns are followed through. Your safeguarding team meets every week to discuss all current cases, and has ensured that all concerns referred to social services or the local authority are followed through and result in actions which support pupils and their parents. Staff teach pupils about the potential risks and dangers they might face. As a result, pupils are kept very safe in school, and when online or on school visits.

The safeguarding governor makes regular visits to the school and takes an active role in monitoring any concerns or records of behaviour incidents. He reports his findings back to the governing body. This demonstrates his commitment to this role.

Inspection findings

- One of the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection asked the school to look at its provision for pupils with ASD and the training of staff working with these pupils. You have set up a dedicated resource base for pupils with ASD. Pupils have the opportunity to work in a secure environment while still following lessons and activities in the rest of the school. The staff who work with these pupils are skilled at intervening when appropriate, anticipating pupils' needs and focusing their attention on learning tasks. Other professionals have set

up programmes, including sensory integration and sensory diets, for some pupils.

- The second area for improvement from the previous inspection asked the school to look at the quality of teaching across the school. This was to make sure that the work set for pupils was challenging, so that pupils can achieve as well as they should. There were many examples where teachers and assistants were using a range of strategies to promote individual pupils' learning and understanding. However, improved assessment procedures would help teachers to match all pupils' learning even more accurately to their needs.
- You and your senior leaders recognise that pupils' attendance in the last school year was lower than that for similar schools. You have put a pastoral team in place which has identified some of the reasons for individual pupils' absence and started to put in place appropriate measures to address this issue and to work with other professionals. The medical issues of your increased number of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties have affected the overall levels of attendance. Additionally, there is a problem with parents not bringing pupils into school on days when they are attending medical appointments. Despite these difficulties, you and your senior leadership team are clear that you need to do more work to continue to address this aspect with rigour.
- Outcomes for pupils at the end of each key stage are good. Students leave the school at the end of the sixth form with accredited qualifications which are challenging for most, and are relevant to their future placements.
- Teachers use the information about what pupils know and can do to plan and deliver learning activities. These meet pupils' needs and link to the pupils' individual plans. Targets are beginning to be informed by education, health and care plans. Objectives are shared with teaching assistants and inform all the activities pupils are following in class. Teachers are beginning to measure pupils' progress against these objectives. They inform pupils' next steps in learning. You have only started to look at how you will use assessment to give you all the information you need to know about how well pupils are doing. You are very clear and realistic about what you need to do. You have begun to plan how you can put this in to practice. You also recognise that the current education, health and care plans need to be rewritten to provide robust evidence of pupils' starting points and targets.
- You have used additional government funding from the pupil premium and the physical education and sport premium on a range of strategies. You have planned these to support the learning and progress of disadvantaged pupils. You have used funding to provide exciting enrichment activities, such as the work with the local repertory company. Staff can talk about the benefits of the extended activities in detail and recognise what pupils and students are gaining from the extra opportunities that they enjoy. However, school leaders cannot show where pupils and students have made this progress because they do not have an assessment system in place which can provide this precise information. You recognise that senior leaders and governors need to receive greater clarity than they do at the moment about the specific effects all initiatives have had on pupils' outcomes. You need this to identify what has given good value and is worthwhile to continue.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- this academic year, they introduce an assessment system which allows teachers to record clear evidence of progress against pupils' personalised small steps of learning in their rewritten education, health and care plans, reflecting the whole breadth of the curriculum in school
- they can measure the impact of additional government funding on pupils' outcomes
- they develop creative strategies to reduce pupils' absence, and especially that of disadvantaged pupils, so that the school's attendance rate rises towards the national average.

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

Robert Roalfe
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

To explore the main areas of enquiry for this inspection, inspectors:

- met with you, senior leaders, the school staff, governors and a representative from the local authority
- met with three parents at the beginning of the school day to discuss their children's welfare and progress
- spoke with pupils and met with a group of pupils and students to discuss their learning and school experiences
- met with staff to discuss the school's progress since the last inspection
- scrutinised a range of documents, including school policies and procedures, work in pupils' folders, teachers' planning files, curriculum folders, the single central record, safeguarding documents, behaviour and attendance records, and the school's system for measuring pupils' progress
- visited, with senior leaders, lessons across key stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form
- considered the views of three parents who contacted Ofsted through the online questionnaire, Parent View, six pupils who responded to the online pupil questionnaire and the 14 responses from staff to the online staff questionnaire.

