

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Ms Linda McCaffrey
Headteacher
Hawkswood
Antlers Hill
Chingford
E4 7RT

Dear Ms McCaffrey

Short inspection of Hawkswood

Following my visit to the school on 7 November 2017 with Joan Deslandes, 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 July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders and staff are committed to providing pupils with a personalised curriculum which meets both their academic and additional needs. You have an accurate picture of the school's current strengths and the areas which need further development. Governors contribute well to your efforts to drive further improvements. This has been strengthened by the reorganisation of the management committee and the sharing of good practice between schools in the wider Hawkswood group.

You, along with other leaders and governors, have a very clear understanding of the particular needs of the pupils attending the school. You ensure that pupils are safe, well cared for and given the care and attention they need to re-engage with their education. Many pupils have been out of school or attending school sporadically prior to attending Hawkswood and they are well supported to become interested in education again. This is evident in the increased attendance of many pupils. Where pupils' mental health needs are still affecting their attendance, leaders have put in place effective strategies to help them to attend more regularly, such as home visits by the child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) therapist or collecting them in the school bus. Parents report that they feel well supported by the school and appreciate the efforts which are made to enable their children to attend school and succeed.

You have a clear commitment to ensuring that pupils achieve positive outcomes. Pupils make good progress in a range of subjects, including towards formal qualifications such as GCSEs, because they are taught well at the school. Leaders work closely with an online provider to ensure that the curriculum is developed regularly and remains appropriate for pupils. Following their attendance at Hawkswood, most pupils return successfully to mainstream education.

You have ensured that the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been addressed. These related to making further improvement in the quality of teaching, and developing the level of expertise in mental health issues. You have developed the assessment systems in collaboration with the online provider to ensure that work is pitched at the correct level for individual pupils. Governors have strengthened their expertise by appointing new members with a knowledge of mental health issues. This has allowed the management committee to increase its understanding of the needs of the pupils and hence provide greater support and challenge to the leadership team.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils' safety and well-being is at the heart of everything the school does. Pupils speak highly of how much the school cares for them and how it has helped them since they started to attend.

The designated safeguarding lead is supported by a leader from the group of schools to which you belong. Weekly meetings enable close monitoring of those pupils who are identified as being at risk.

Leaders, including governors, are able to articulate clearly the particular risks faced by the pupils attending the unit and the strategies which have been put in place to support them, for example increased mental health support and working in partnership with other agencies such as the police. Where pupils display risky behaviour, plans are agreed between the pupil, staff and family to ensure everyone's safety.

Safeguarding record-keeping is meticulous. When there are concerns about a pupil, swift action is taken. This includes offering additional school support and making referrals to other agencies. Therefore, nothing is overlooked and the risks pupils face are identified and addressed. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Inspection findings

- We agreed that we would first look at the curriculum. We considered how the curriculum is designed and adapted to meet the specific needs of pupils and how it prepares them for the next stage of their education. Inspectors found that the school has an effective curriculum which enables pupils to progress to the next stage of their education with worthwhile qualifications, including GCSEs. Most pupils successfully return to mainstream schools after two terms at Hawkswood.

- Around half of the curriculum is delivered via an online learning package. Leaders have worked very closely with the online provider to ensure that the curriculum is regularly reviewed and developed. Following an initial assessment when pupils join the school, leaders provide the teachers from the online learning company with detailed information about each pupil's individual learning and personal needs. This means staff are able to plan appropriate activities that engage each pupil in their learning and address gaps in their knowledge and understanding. The other half of the curriculum is delivered via 'live' lessons at the school. Inspectors visited personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons which were particularly relevant to the pupils as they focused on understanding emotions and relationships with others. Activities were selected which held the pupils' interest and encouraged interaction between pupils and staff.
- Inspectors also considered how well leaders and governors ensure pupils' safety and well-being and provide the skills to enable them to re-engage with education. A therapist is available full-time at the school and provides effective support that enables pupils to manage their emotions more effectively, particularly in difficult situations. This means that pupils attend school more regularly than they did at their mainstream school.
- Relationships between staff at all levels and pupils are a strength. The high level of trust enables pupils to become interested in learning and supports them to 'have a go'. Staff demonstrate appropriate behaviour and relationships and this is particularly evident in the calmness and respect which is shown to the pupils.
- We then looked at how leaders know if pupils are making good progress and how well activities are matched to pupils' individual needs. Many pupils are working at a level significantly below age-related expectations on joining the school. Inspectors found that leaders have developed clear systems for tracking and monitoring the progress pupils make from when they arrive at the school.
- Leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Expectations of academic progress in mathematics and English are the same as those expected in a mainstream school. The majority of pupils achieve this rate of progress. During their second term of attendance, rates of progress for some pupils are accelerated further.
- Leaders have worked effectively with the online learning provider to develop integrated assessment systems. Pupils are involved in discussions about their own progress on a regular basis. This ensures that they understand the progress they are making and any areas where they fall behind can be addressed.
- Leaders monitor academic progress very closely. However, outcomes for pupils at the unit are looked at holistically. The improvement in their mental health, confidence, well-being and attendance is very clearly evident. Leaders, including governors, recognise that they need to formalise how this progress is measured and recorded.
- Inspectors also looked at progress in English as this was identified as being slower than progress in mathematics and science at the last inspection. Progress in English is now at a similar rate to progress in other subjects. Leaders and teachers ensure that English skills are also taught in other lessons. For example,

in a PHSE lesson, pupils were able to write about how they had felt when starting at the school and how their feelings have changed over time. Pupils read on a regular basis within their class groups. For example, inspectors saw pupils become animated when discussing which character they were each going to read from a story. The pupils were then confident to read out loud and those who needed help were sensitively supported by staff.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- systems are put in place to measure pupils' progress in managing their own mental health and well-being.

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

Yours sincerely

Charlotte Millward
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with leaders, governors, staff, the online learning company, parents and pupils. Inspectors attended both online and 'live' lessons and breaktimes. Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation, progress and assessment information including examination results, and a range of safeguarding documentation. There were no staff or pupil responses to the Ofsted questionnaires. There were insufficient responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents) for these to be considered.