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Mrs Annie Sutton
Executive Principal
St Joseph's Specialist School and College
Amlets Lane
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Dear Mrs Sutton

Short inspection of St Joseph's Specialist School and College

Following my visit to the school on 14 November 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school is a happy and highly caring place. The rich curriculum is sharply focused on meeting pupils' needs and aspirations. Pupils' learning and wider development is catered for extremely well.

You and your senior leadership team provide strong leadership. Senior leaders have an incisive understanding of the school's effectiveness. You make sure that any aspect of provision that is less than outstanding is quickly spotted and tackled. Rightly, you place a high emphasis on ensuring that teaching is sharply attuned to pupils' learning and development needs. Leaders are making sure that teachers new to the school, and in some cases the profession, are quickly brought up to speed with the school's high expectations. Extremely effective training and support are in place to this end. Leaders are very much abreast of changing national expectations and have embraced a heightened focus on preparing pupils for adulthood and new thinking about assessment.

You have refreshed the curriculum to make it even more effective. This has helped to ensure that pupils' learning experiences are consistently extremely well linked to their educational needs and longer-term goals. Leaders have built on existing strengths in the school's curriculum, increasing and broadening pupils' opportunities to experience the world of work. You have raised aspirations for pupils' progress, introducing more-aspirational academic targets, clearly linked to pupil's ability. Well-considered work is under way to pull all aspects of assessment together so that

teaching is even more strongly rooted in a holistic understanding of pupils' progress and learning needs. A blueprint for this new approach is now in place. You are rightly eager to complete this work and ensure that it is put into practice effectively.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Checks on the suitability of staff are sound. Staff are well briefed and have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. Staff are alert for signs that a pupil may be at risk. The leader responsible for safeguarding maintains effective communication with staff and outside agencies, ensuring that the right level of support is in place for any pupil who might be at risk. The leader has a clear understanding of the different requirements and ways of working of the many local authorities who place pupils at the school. This helps to ensure that suitable support is sought and obtained for any pupil who needs it, as swiftly as possible.

Leaders are reflective and quick to learn from any 'near miss'. For example, an extremely comprehensive approach is now in place to ensure a consistently effective response if a child absconds. Staff are crystal clear about their responsibilities. An individual risk assessment is in place for each pupil which details the steps staff will take to find any missing pupil swiftly and make sure that they are safe.

Inspection findings

- Teaching is typically highly effective. Close working between education staff and therapists ensures that learning activities are sharply focused on meeting pupils' learning and development needs. This supports outstanding progress over time.
- Leaders have recognised that a few teachers are not consistently meeting the school's high expectations. A robust programme of support is in place. Senior leaders are monitoring the impact of this closely, ensuring that middle leaders execute their role in this work thoroughly and effectively. Leaders are rightly quick to adjust their approach when needed, to ensure the success of their work.
- The school makes increasingly effective use of assessment to inform teaching and support for pupils' wider development. More highly aspirational targets have been introduced for pupils' achievement in English and mathematics. This has helped to ensure high expectations and a sharper focus on supporting any pupil not meeting these targets. Leaders' plans to pull together all strands of pupils' learning and development to provide a clear and comprehensive overview of the targets and achievement of each pupil are very well judged.
- The school provides a rich range of opportunities for all pupils who are able to, to study vocational subjects, and prepare very well for the world of work. The offer is highly bespoke to each pupil's interests and aspirations. Links with colleges and local employers are utilised very effectively. For example, some pupils apply their learning from horticulture lessons by working in the grounds, others study the subject at college, or work at the local garden centre or nearby private school.

Pupils also work at the local stables, retail stores and cafes or benefit from internal work-experience opportunities such as working as a mail courier.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's new assessment approach is fully embedded so teaching is even more deeply informed by an incisive, holistic understanding of pupils' learning and development needs.

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

Yours sincerely

Diana Choulerton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and your leadership team at the start of the day. We discussed your evaluation of the school's effectiveness and agreed the key areas we would focus on during the inspection.

During the day, I held further discussions with you. I met with the chair and four other members of the governing body. Inspectors observed learning in 14 lessons, all jointly with a leader. We also scrutinised pupils' work and progress files and spoke with staff and pupils. We took account of 18 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including four free-text responses. Inspectors analysed a range of the school's documentation, including leaders' checks on pupils' progress, and safeguarding policies and procedures.