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Mr David Monk
Headteacher
Pond Meadow School
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Dear Mr Monk

Short inspection of Pond Meadow School

Following my visit to the school on 16 November 2017 with Susan Conway, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be outstanding in February 2014.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your school is extremely inclusive. All adults support the wide range of pupils' special educational needs, including those who have disabilities, exceptionally well, so that pupils are happy, very safe and make excellent progress.

You and your senior leadership team have created a culture of calm positivity and respect for each other's work, which permeates all aspects of the school. Recent changes to the leadership structure have been well thought through. Your senior team and new middle leaders are passionate about maximising pupils' life chances by ensuring that individualised approaches to teaching, learning and assessment help pupils to make strong progress. Your highly motivated staff enjoy working at the school and know that leaders value the excellent work that they do. Your staff are very well trained and feel exceptionally well supported. Governors are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and areas which could be developed further. Their strategic oversight provides highly effective support and challenge to the school. Strong links with outside agencies add to the effectiveness of the school.

Pond Meadow's values of 'learning, independence, respect and equality' are clear to see throughout the school. Your extremely inclusive approach to understanding pupils' varied and often complex needs, and to managing their behaviour sensitively, is at the heart of what makes your school such a positive place. Staff

know pupils very well, and pupils trust adults to help and care for them. Pupils present as happy and show enjoyment in their learning. Those that spoke to inspectors said that they like coming to school, feel safe and enjoy the different activities, which help them learn new things. Pupils' achievements are regularly celebrated during lessons and in assemblies. Pupils appreciate contributing to the school council, and know that their ideas are listened to and acted on.

You have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. You recognise the school's many strengths, and consider carefully factors which may affect the school's future work. For example, you recognise that the school's intake now contains some more-able pupils, and you are preparing well to include more writing in the curriculum to meet these pupils' needs as they progress up the school.

While one or two parents would value more communication with the school, the vast majority of parents are full of praise for the school, using words such as 'absolutely incredible' and 'brilliant' to describe its staff. One parent summed up the views of many by saying, 'Staff never fail to treat my son with dignity and respect. I feel that my child is being fully prepared for life when he leaves the safe and caring environment of this incredibly special school.'

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership of safeguarding is outstanding. Staff are very well trained and knowledgeable of the potential risks to pupils. The school's meticulous records show that staff are vigilant and report any concerns promptly. Leaders work highly efficiently with parents and with outside agencies to protect pupils. Staff show a high level of care for pupils. They understand the importance of advocating for their pupils to make sure that pupils' welfare and safeguarding are at the top of everyone's agenda.

Checks to ensure that adults working in the school are suitable to work with children are thorough. Risk assessments show that staff pay careful attention to potential risks when planning activities such as outings to the local supermarket.

Safeguarding is at the heart of the curriculum. Teachers help pupils to understand that they always have a choice and can 'say no' if something makes them unhappy or uncomfortable. Leaders make sure that pupils are able to access the internet safely in school, and that pupils know to tell an adult if anything makes them concerned. Leaders' plans to prioritise the safety of the few pupils who use the internet independently are well thought through.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, my focus areas were: how effectively leaders have tackled the area for improvement set at the last inspection; how effectively leaders ensure that pupils attend school regularly; how effectively leaders make sure that pupils make excellent progress; and how effectively are pupils prepared for the next stage of their education and training when they leave the school.

- At Pond Meadow's last inspection, leaders were asked to make improvements to the outdoor play areas for children in the youngest classes. You have acted on this well, providing several areas for children to challenge themselves, investigate and learn outdoors. New, bespoke equipment has been carefully designed to maximise opportunities for children to play together or alone. Your evaluations of the effectiveness of these areas show that children are increasingly creative and imaginative in their play.
- You, your leaders and governors make sure that pupils attend school as frequently as possible. Most pupils do attend regularly. However, you recognise that some pupils experience difficulty making the daily transition between home and school. You work highly effectively with these pupils and their parents, finding personalised solutions which help pupils to feel more comfortable and safe when they move between home and school. You also liaise very well with medical providers to make sure that pupils who require medical help receive it promptly. You can demonstrate that your approaches are working to ensure that pupils attend school more regularly.
- Pupils at Pond Meadow make very strong progress from their different starting points. Teachers carefully assess what each pupil understands and can do. They use this information to inform their planning for each pupil, expertly building on pupils' learning to make sure that pupils make excellent progress. For example, pupils achieve standards in reading and number above those of pupils who have similar special educational needs nationally. Leaders and governors make sure that additional funding such as the pupil premium is targeted very well, so that pupils who qualify for this funding make similarly strong progress to their peers.
- Your curriculum is full of opportunities for pupils to develop their personal, social and communication skills, which help to prepare them very well for when they leave Pond Meadow School. Much of pupils' learning from Year 7 counts towards achieving recognised qualifications, which show post-19 education providers that pupils have acquired a broad range of useful skills. You make sure that pupils start planning for their next steps and begin visiting possible colleges from Year 9, so that by the time pupils reach the end of Year 14, they know what to expect and are ready to move on. Many pupils demonstrate their communication skills and community involvement by taking the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Frequent outings into the local community also help prepare pupils very well for their future. For example, pupils use the local gym every week, and regularly visit the supermarket to choose food which they take back to school and prepare for their lunch. All pupils who leave Pond Meadow go on to take courses which further develop their skills and abilities.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to explore ways to meet the changing needs of pupils, including new approaches to writing for the increasing proportion of more-able pupils.

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

Catherine Old
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, your senior management team, other staff, governors, parents and two groups of pupils. I spoke to a representative of the local authority on the telephone. Inspectors observed 16 lessons across all key stages, most with senior leaders. Inspectors scrutinised a broad selection of pupils' work. Inspectors analysed the 17 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire, as well as confidential survey responses from 10 staff and seven pupils. Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documents, including self-evaluation and improvement plans, governors' minutes and safeguarding information.