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Ms Marilyn Ross  
Executive Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Ross

### **Short inspection of The Michael Tippett School**

Following my visit to the school on 22 November 2017 with Grace Marriott, 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 September 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. In the two years that you have been in post, you have established an impressive and effective leadership team. You have moved the school on to the point where one member of staff I spoke to said that it was 'unrecognisable'. The developments that you and your leadership team have created are greatly valued by families, staff and governors.

Leaders provide a purposeful and welcoming school that reflects your commitment to providing the very best for your pupils. Effective teaching across the school has enabled pupils to learn skills that are then widely applied in the local community. One pupil who previously was thought to be too great a risk to leave your building was taught the social skills needed to visit the local area. He is now thriving at college as a consequence.

You have high expectations for both academic and personal development progress, including of those who have the most complex needs. There is a strong emphasis on making sure that pupils are ready for learning. Your whole team uses a consistent approach to helping pupils to manage their behaviour positively, and this has led to an exceptionally high number of pupils meeting or exceeding expectations in personal development. Where potential behaviour incidents arise, they are swiftly and skilfully avoided because all staff know pupils extremely well. Highly effective work with external agencies ensures that staff have access to the specialist guidance they need to feel confident to support the needs of even the

most challenging pupils.

The level of absence has reduced significantly since you became headteacher. You have brought about a change in culture and have raised expectations around attendance, including for those who have additional health needs.

Staff, pupil and parent satisfaction is high. Those parents we spoke to felt that information about their child's progress was of good quality, and that issues were resolved swiftly. One parent felt that your arrangements to prepare pupils for college were particularly strong. The three pupils I spoke to said that the school made them feel happy and safe.

Through positive communication with staff, multidisciplinary professionals and families, you have identified the need to assess the holistic development of your pupils. You have developed a comprehensive system for tracking personal and social development, although further work is required to ensure that your holistic targets are secure.

You are at the early stage of developing your middle leaders to create a more distributed leadership team. This will provide more scope to monitor standards of teaching and learning, and support you to achieve your ambitious vision for the school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders, including governors, have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders and governors have established a safe culture that is visible throughout the school. Children with medical conditions are kept safe because systems to support their care are rigorous, and staff receive thorough and regular support.

All staff receive appropriate safeguarding training. This has ensured that safeguarding responsibilities throughout the school are taken extremely seriously. Weekly safeguarding conversations in briefings maintain high levels of vigilance and keep staff alert to risks in the school and local community.

### **Inspection findings**

- We first checked on the extent to which leaders and governors ensured that there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Leaders and governors are not afraid to challenge other professionals in order to keep children safe, and will escalate concerns where necessary. This demonstrates your relentless drive to ensure that even the most vulnerable pupils and their families receive the support and care they need. A combination of close working with other agencies and specialist training ensures that all staff are well equipped to meet the complex medical, physical and emotional needs of your pupils.

- Pupils are taught the vocabulary they need to discuss positive and negative aspects of their lives, as well as being taught about consenting to touch in a respectful and practical way. Because of this, all pupils know what to do to keep themselves safe.
- Although practice in relation to safeguarding is strong, there is some work to be done to ensure that this is reflected in policy, for example in clarifying the role of the deputy designated safeguarding lead in your child protection policy.
- Next, we looked at the extent to which leaders at all levels ensure that the curriculum builds on prior learning, and prepares pupils for life in modern Britain.
- You and your staff have made ambitious changes that have led to a more relevant and age-appropriate curriculum. This work was welcomed by staff, one of whom felt that it was 'long overdue'. A teacher I spoke to told me that the new curriculum had allowed pupils new opportunities to develop and practise new skills in the local community. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education because of your focus throughout the school on social and life skills. Work experience and enterprise projects provide opportunities for pupils to rehearse skills they can then use in later life. There is a strong emphasis on reading and writing across the school, and you are building on this by creating a more functional literacy curriculum.
- Teaching staff have an in-depth knowledge of pupils' special educational needs. They are able to set purposeful and meaningful targets. Consequently, almost all pupils meet or exceed expectations in academic and personal development aspects of learning.
- You are confident that English and mathematics targets are secure, following external moderation with a network of local schools. Although target-setting in English and mathematics is well established, this is not yet the case for personal development. Leaders have still to agree how these targets will be verified externally.
- Highly effective partnership work with speech and language therapists has helped school staff to confidently use a range of communication support strategies, including signing, touch cues and symbol-based support. There is universal use of symbols, allowing learning opportunities to be seized throughout the day. For example, when one pupil got off the bus wanting a hug, his teaching assistant promptly used symbol cards to explain that a handshake was more appropriate in this situation. However, it would be useful to consider the learning objective when choosing which communication strategies to use in some lessons.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the curriculum development work is thoroughly embedded and that all staff are equipped to teach it to the highest standard
- you continue to develop the work you have begun with your middle leaders to provide consistent standards of teaching and monitoring of assessments

- your assessments for personal and social development are secure and externally validated.

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

Yours sincerely

Francis McDonald-Gonzalez

**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, the inspection team held a number of meetings with you and other senior leaders. You accompanied the inspector on a series of short visits to lessons. The inspection team held discussions with different leaders about safeguarding, the curriculum, removing barriers to learning, and measuring pupils' progress. Meetings were held with the chair of the governing body and one other governor, and a group of staff and middle leaders. We also spoke to a group of pupils and I observed a drama group. The inspection team worked with senior leaders to scrutinise pupils' work and assessment information on pupils' progress. The inspectors looked at a range of documentation. This included the improvement plan, attendance data, records of pupils' progress and behaviour, your safeguarding audit, and evidence of records to keep pupils safe. The inspection took into consideration 36 responses to the staff survey. There were too few responses to Parent View to generate a meaningful analysis.