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Mrs Sharon Burt  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Burt

### **Short inspection of Oak Lodge School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 November 2017 with Gary Anderson, 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 November 2012.

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

Leaders and governors have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. They have achieved this in spite of a number of changes in senior leadership and governance. You became the new headteacher in September 2017, bringing an ambitious vision, and you appreciate the skills of the team you have inherited. Staff are enthusiastic to support you to make further improvements and share your passion to ensure that pupils become increasingly successful learners irrespective of having a special educational need (SEN) and/or disability. You have worked quickly to establish an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are rightly developing the leadership team's skills so that leaders can carefully evaluate the impact of current improvement actions.

All staff are proud to work at the school and most said that it has improved since the last inspection. You are aware that some staff and a few parents are finding the present period of change to be a challenge, and you are sensitive to their concerns. Recently introduced systems to support pupils' conduct mean that the school is an increasingly calm and purposeful place to learn. New ways of tracking pupils' achievement aim for much-needed and closer scrutiny of pupils' learning and their ongoing progress. These initiatives have not had time to become established practice.

Leaders have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Staff successfully develop pupils' communication and literacy skills in

different subjects. Pupils develop independence as they move through the school. They like to make decisions and to have choices, knowing that staff are at hand to provide reassurance.

In each year group, there are a few pupils who have the potential to achieve high standards in subjects in which they have a particular strength. Teachers skilfully provide for these pupils' diverse needs through highly personalised programmes of support. The school works cooperatively with the neighbouring secondary school, enabling a few pupils to experience mainstream classrooms in appropriate subjects. Consequently, higher-attaining pupils have an opportunity to study for GCSE mathematics and English alongside their mainstream peers. In 2017, this small number of pupils achieved higher grades than higher-attaining pupils in previous years.

In the school's caring environment, pupils enjoy sincere relationships with staff and with each other. Inspectors met a number of pupils in class, on the playground and in a meeting. They told us that they enjoy their lessons and find their learning tasks to be motivating. In lessons, a few confident pupils eagerly showed inspectors their workbooks and explained how they use what they have learned to make their writing interesting. They enjoy using computers to support their research and presentation. Pupils like the many practical subjects available at school and appreciate the study choices they can make when they reach key stage 4.

Learning environments are well equipped to support pupils to develop vocational skills for the future. Modern kitchen equipment helps pupils to work to a professional standard in food technology lessons. Pupils also learn how to keep themselves fit and healthy, for example by using the neighbouring community leisure centre for physical education (PE) and swimming. The school offers activities that extend beyond the school day, such as a club that helps pupils to learn how to use their leisure time productively. Disadvantaged pupils are supported effectively to make the most of these opportunities.

Governors make a strong contribution to the school's improvement. Those I spoke to know the school well. They recognise that you have the drive to implement identified priorities and provide effective support for your work. Governors offer challenge by asking and following through searching questions. They can already identify improvements since your arrival at the school, including a sharp decrease in fixed-term exclusions and more robust checks on absence.

Pupils' behaviour was consistently positive during the inspection. They were polite and interested in inspectors as visitors to their school. Leaders and governors did not hide the fact that behavioural incidents occur, although they have reduced throughout the past year. Pupils understand the diverse range of individual needs at the school and realise that this can sometimes lead to difficulties. They sensibly explained how 'some pupils act differently because of their disabilities'. Leaders emphasise a team approach to managing behaviour that aims quickly to notice small differences in a pupil's typical behaviour and de-escalate before an incident occurs. A small minority of staff expressed their concerns to inspectors about the

management of some pupils' behaviour.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

School leaders do all they can to ensure that pupils feel safe and all staff are constantly vigilant. They are quickly alert to any concern about pupils' care or safety because they know each pupil very well. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All staff and governors are trained to meet their responsibilities and they are kept up to date. Careful and timely communication with parents and other professionals ensures that families are supported to help their child attend well, enjoy and achieve at school.

Leaders' are aware that there are particular safeguarding risks that apply to pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. They have used this knowledge to shape the school's curriculum. Learning opportunities help pupils to understand how to keep themselves safe in school, at home and in the community. For example, pupils learn how to use equipment safely in the playground and in food and design technology classes, and they understand the importance of keeping safe online. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school because other pupils behave well. They told inspectors that there is no bullying and they know to tell any adult if they have any worries. Most parents said that their child is happy, well cared for and feels safe when at school.

### **Inspection findings**

During this inspection, inspectors took account of the effectiveness of leadership and of how well leaders ensure that teaching, learning and assessment support pupils to succeed. We also looked at the extent to which pupils develop their personal skills and whether outcomes remain good.

- Almost all pupils enter the school with starting points that are well below those typical for their age. The school's own information reports that pupils reach academic outcomes that are consistently strong, and a high proportion of pupils make expected or better progress from their baseline. Published information shows that by the end of key stage 4 all pupils achieve success across a range of accreditations and move into further education.
- Inspectors saw that teachers' expectations of pupils are consistently high. Pupils are used to working hard and concentrating on their learning tasks. Most pupils readily respond to teachers' questions. In a few classrooms that inspectors visited, they saw some very effective questioning that supported pupils to think deeply. For example, in an English class, key stage 4 pupils talked about the mood of a reading text using vocabulary such as 'bleak' and 'unbearable'.
- Purposeful tutor time at the beginning of the school day helps pupils to be ready to learn. Teachers skilfully shape lessons to make content interesting and relevant to pupils. Lessons promote partner and group work that enables pupils to work cooperatively. Pupils also work independently and show single-mindedness, such as in a Year 9 class where pupils showed persistence when

making wooden animals with a moving part.

- Where barriers in learning are identified, suitably matched support is put into place. This is particularly effective in reading in which pupils make strong gains over a short timescale. The 'catch up' they make helps them in other subjects, such as when reading the ingredients for a recipe.
- Inspectors saw some inconsistencies in the ways that learning is assessed. You are aware of this and are already taking steps to enhance the way in which attainment and progress information will contribute towards whole-school improvement priorities. Since the start of the autumn term, pupils have a 'basic skills tracker' in their books. They like the idea of this tracker to record their progress. They do not understand all skills targets because they are not written in pupil-friendly language. Some teachers have regularly checked progress in these skills while others have not, and some trackers do not appear to be in use at all. Leaders have not monitored implementation carefully enough to identify inconsistencies and support teachers to develop implement-agreed strategies.
- Pupils benefit from some very strong teaching and learning in some classes, where tasks are expertly adapted to match pupils' specific needs. This helps pupils to achieve a depth of understanding. Leaders do not make enough use of the school's best practice to raise the overall quality of teaching and learning.
- Leaders place a high value on developing each pupil as an individual, equipping them with skills for the future. Pupils' personal development is a strength of the school and contributes strongly to academic success. Positive learning behaviours result from high-quality relationships between pupils and all staff. Pupils have recently deepened their understanding of the school's values, which reflect fundamental British values. They enjoy earning merits for showing tolerance and respect and for keeping to rules. Pupils can explain why these qualities are important.
- The school has a strong tradition of using art, drama and music to develop pupils' expression, confidence and self-awareness. During the summer term, the whole school enjoyed a production at Chichester Festival Theatre, which inspired pupils' use of drama into performance. This experience supported pupils to develop self-esteem and celebrate their successes with parents. The headteacher and governors are aware that the school's website is currently not the communication tool they want it to be for parents. Governors are aware of missing elements and recognise the need for some information to be refreshed.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they evaluate closely the implementation of current actions to improve teaching, learning and pupils' progress, using their findings to inform and support school improvement priorities
- teachers make use of their assessments of pupils' learning to inform more precisely the next steps in teaching
- the school's website meets all requirements and is kept up to date.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda Jacobs  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, the deputy headteacher, two assistant headteachers and other leaders. We met with two members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. We talked to a number of pupils on the playground, in lessons and during an arranged meeting. We visited most classes with a senior leader, taking in a wide range of different curriculum subjects across key stages 3 and 4. We reviewed a small sample of pupils' books in English and mathematics and heard a few pupils read.

We looked at a range of school documentation. This included the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan, governing body minutes, information on the school's website, the single central record of recruitment checks, and pupils' attendance and performance information. We took account of 13 responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey with accompanying freetext responses, as well as the school's very recent parental survey with 33 responses. There were 27 staff responses to their questionnaire.