

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



13 December 2017

Mrs M Beard
Headteacher
Millstead School
Iliad Street
Liverpool
Merseyside
L5 3LU

Dear Mrs Beard

Short inspection of Millstead School

Following my visit to the school on 29 November 2017 with Dawn Farrent, 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You have overcome significant challenges in maintaining the effectiveness of your school. This includes moving to a new school building and overseeing a significant increase in pupil numbers. You tackled these challenges head on. They did not hinder your ongoing desire to provide the best possible experiences for your pupils. A key strength of your leadership is your constant drive to improve. This is borne out by the high expectations you have that all pupils will achieve their potential, no matter what obstacles lie in their way. Your vision is clearly understood and shared by governors and staff. The result is a school which is forward looking, is held in very high esteem in the community and in which pupils flourish.

Many pupils have complex needs. These are met particularly well. There is a consistent approach to teaching and learning. Regular checks take place to ensure that pupils make the progress expected of them. Pupils are happy and are cared for exceptionally well. Consequently, there is an air of calm, which permeates the school as pupils go about their daily learning. There is a tangible team spirit among the staff who are fully committed and feel valued by leaders and governors. The vast majority of parents who expressed their views were fulsome in their praise of your work. As one parent reported, 'This is a brilliant school that supports my son and his additional needs completely.'

At your previous inspection, the inspector noted two areas for future development.

The first area related to the further development of staff on their journeys to become effective leaders in school. This is now a very strong aspect of your work. Staff receive regular training and have many opportunities to observe each other's practice, visit other schools to share good practice and take on additional responsibility. Staff value the investment made from leaders and governors in their personal and professional development.

The second aspect for improvement concerned your making best use of the new school building. You have certainly grasped this opportunity with both hands. The facilities within the new building enable you to meet the complex needs of pupils very well. Pupils thrive as a result.

We discussed some areas for further development. You have introduced a curriculum to further support pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. There are encouraging signs of positive impact, but we agreed that this needs to become further embedded. We also discussed how your new assessment arrangements for pupils who have the most complex needs could be further enhanced. This involves your continued work with other schools to compare and moderate your assessment judgements more closely.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Safeguarding has a high priority in the school. Regular checks are completed around the school site to ensure that there are no hazards. Similar checks are completed on the many facilities and the different pieces of equipment which are used to support pupils' learning. Leaders go over and above the requirements to keep these most vulnerable pupils safe. For example, safeguarding training is completed annually. This includes every member of staff and any external staff, such as those who provide transport. As a result, staff have a clear understanding of their duties and know what to do if there are any signs of abuse.

Staff are alert to any signs of concern because there are clear procedures to follow. Records show that staff report any concerns as they arise and there is a swift response from leaders. External agencies are involved where necessary. Where external agencies are slow to respond, leaders do not shy away from taking matters further to ensure the safety of pupils. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they have a trusted adult who would help them if they were worried about anything. Every parent we spoke to and those who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, agreed that pupils feel safe at school.

Inspection findings

- The curriculum is well thought out and is sharply focused on meeting pupils' individual needs. The majority of pupils have very complex needs and are not able to access learning within the national curriculum. Where pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties, there is a focus on developing pupils' abilities to communicate and engage with their wider environment. Pupils who

have profound autism complete activities which develop their abilities to communicate and socialise with others. Developing pupils' independence is a key aim for all staff. Many parents reported on the positive impact of this work and the difference it makes to family life. Parents also value how leaders and staff provide ongoing advice to families so they can support pupils at home. Some pupils have complex health needs which require ongoing attention. In these cases, health partners provide medical support which is threaded through the daily learning activities of pupils, ensuring that pupils remain in school. The curriculum is a key ingredient to the success of the school. It supports pupils to make at least good and often outstanding progress from their starting points.

- Staff have an intimate knowledge of pupils' needs and are alert to any small steps of progress. All staff work closely together to develop pupils' learning whether it be sensory, social, skills- or knowledge-based. Many pupils are not able to communicate easily. Staff are skilled at trying a range of approaches to identify pupils' preferred ways of learning. Staff are also skilled at providing the correct level of support – not too much and not too little. They have high expectations of pupils and expect them to be as independent as possible. As a result of the exemplary support from staff, pupils make strong progress over time.
- Ongoing checks on pupils' learning are a real strength of your school. When pupils join, your staff complete painstaking assessments to gauge pupils' abilities and needs. Staff then assess pupils' learning in daily activities to check where pupils have understood and where further learning is needed. These regular assessments inform teaching activities and ensure that teaching is well matched to pupils' abilities. Where pupils have ongoing health needs, health professionals engage seamlessly to provide a holistic approach. Health professionals are also involved in regular reviews of progress and in planning for pupils' future needs. The strength of assessment, which aligns very closely with the curriculum, ensures that pupils' needs are met very well.
- You place great value in pupils attending school regularly. Due to the complex health needs of many pupils, there is an ongoing requirement for medical intervention. You work hand in hand with health partners and other professionals to manage pupils' care so pupils can attend regularly. For example, you arrange clinics in school, dispensing with the need for pupils to attend external medical appointments. Sessions with therapists also take place in school. Your staff are quick to follow up on any absences. Systems are robust and any concerns are quickly passed on to senior leaders. Where families are struggling to ensure pupils' regular attendance, you are quick to respond and provide support to overcome any barriers. It is no surprise that pupils' attendance has improved over the last two years.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the recent introduction of a social, emotional and mental health curriculum becomes more embedded

- ongoing work with other schools continues, so that you can compare and moderate the assessment of pupils who have complex needs more closely.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Hardman
Senior Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, the deputy headteacher, a group of teachers and a group of support staff. I also spoke with a number of health professionals who were providing care to pupils. We met with five governors, including the chair of the governing body and the school improvement partner. We spoke with four parents and considered the response of 16 parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. We visited the vast majority of classrooms, jointly with you or your deputy headteacher, to observe and engage with pupils about their learning. We met with a group of five pupils from across the school and engaged with several pupils during breaktimes and in lessons.

We considered a wide range of documentation relating to your self-evaluation, school improvement planning, attendance information, governance, monitoring and evaluation, assessment and safeguarding.