

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



25 January 2018

Ms KT Khan
Executive Headteacher
Ms Pat Quiqley
Head of School
The Garden School
Wordsworth Road
London
N16 8BZ

Dear Ms Khan and Ms Quigley

Short inspection of The Garden School

Following my visit to the school on 16 January 2018 with Joy Barter, 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 2014.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Staff have a positive and welcoming outlook and you have a clear drive to secure the very best outcomes for pupils. All staff are committed to providing a very high-quality education which fully meets the needs of the pupils who attend.

You have recently strengthened the leadership capacity by appointing middle leaders with key areas of responsibility. Middle leaders are already having an impact on driving improvements. Since the last inspection, the needs of pupils who attend the school have changed and numbers have increased. Now all pupils have a diagnosis of autism. Leaders have responded to these changes well. They have reviewed and developed the curriculum and other areas of the school's work to ensure that pupils' specific needs are met.

Leaders, including governors, have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This means that areas for development are identified and addressed effectively. Governors contribute well to your efforts to drive improvement by providing a balance of support and challenge.

You and your leadership team ensure that there is great consistency in practice across the school. All staff share your strong vision and values. Staff at all levels have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They value the strong induction programme and ongoing training which means they have the skills they need to

support pupils extremely well.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that record-keeping is detailed and of high quality. Leaders carry out all checks to make sure adults working with the children are suitable. Staff are vigilant in looking for signs of harm. All staff and governors receive safeguarding training, including in areas such as the 'Prevent' duty and female genital mutilation. Staff are particularly aware of looking for other signs such as changes in behaviour or appearance of pupils who are unable to communicate verbally.

Leaders work with other agencies to ensure that pupils are always kept safe. Referrals to other agencies are timely and well-written. The curriculum is designed to show pupils how to stay safe and maintain their emotional regulation and well-being. For example, inspectors observed pupils using sharp knives safely to chop vegetables to make soup for the café. Pupils who are able are taught to travel independently. Two older pupils now travel independently and safely to school using public transport.

Pupils enjoy school and attend extremely well. Leaders follow up on any pupils who are absent each day to make sure pupils are safe. All groups of pupils attend equally well.

Inspection findings

- First, we agreed to look at the curriculum and how well it meets the needs of pupils. Leaders have recently reviewed the curriculum to ensure that it meets the changing needs of the pupils. Leaders worked in conjunction with key stakeholders, such as parents and therapists, as well as school staff to design the new curriculum. They have designed and implemented an exceptional curriculum which fully meets the needs of pupils with autism. At the heart of the curriculum is a strong focus on developing pupils' emotional regulation, behaviour, communication and independence. Leaders, teachers and other adults take every opportunity across all curriculum areas to improve these skills.
- Pupils' substantial and sustained progress in their personal development provides an excellent foundation for their learning across the curriculum. During visits to classrooms, inspectors observed a group of lower-ability pupils who all knew to put their snacks away, clean the table, then put on their coats. These pupils showed independence. A group of higher-ability pupils were able to follow instructions using symbols or text to work independently and safely in the food technology room to make pizza. All adults understand the needs of pupils with autism and know individual pupils very well. This means they are able to provide the right level of support to enable pupils to succeed. Staff know when to sit back and allow pupils to work independently and when to intervene to provide support.
- Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education and life. Throughout the school, there is a focus on the development of functional

skills which are relevant and useful for pupils. For example, one secondary-aged pupil spoke to inspectors about preparing snacks for younger pupils in the school. Other pupils participate in work-related learning by working in the school café. Older pupils have the opportunity to develop skills such as ironing and household chores in a flat for independent living. Younger pupils develop their independence by learning to follow routines and meeting significant milestones such as becoming toilet-trained. All pupils who left the school during the last academic year secured a post-16 placement in another school or college.

- Next, we considered how well pupils progress at the school. Leaders use a range of detailed systems for collecting and analysing information about the progress pupils make. Progress in English, mathematics and science is tracked in detail. However, due to national changes, leaders have recognised that they now need to review and further develop the systems they are using for measuring progress in these curriculum subjects. Assessment systems extend to measuring progress in behaviour, emotional regulation and independence, which are key areas for all the pupils. Carefully chosen targets are reviewed regularly. Pupils move on to more challenging targets as soon as they are ready, meaning that they make sustained progress in these areas. Teachers adjust targets where pupils are not making the progress they would expect so that progress is secured.
- Pupils make excellent progress from their very low starting points in all areas of their development. All groups in the school achieve equally well, including those who are eligible for pupil premium funding. Leaders, including the new middle leader for assessment, analyse the progress pupils are making very closely. This means that any pupil who is falling behind is quickly identified and helped to catch up.
- Parents are extremely happy with the progress their children make. One parent described how, since starting at the school, her child's progress in key areas has had a positive impact on the life of the whole family. Parents feel very well supported by the school through workshops, individual family support and progress information which is shared with them regularly.
- Leaders have fully addressed the area for improvement identified at the previous inspection. All meetings about pupil progress are now very carefully focused on analysing learning and their effectiveness is regularly monitored. All adults working with the pupils are involved in weekly discussions about each pupil's progress and the next steps for their learning. This means work is very carefully matched to pupils' needs and small steps of progress are built upon systematically.
- Finally, we looked at how well all staff work together to promote positive behaviour. Leaders have created a strong vision for promoting positive behaviour across the school which is shared by all staff. The very comprehensive behaviour policy is understood by staff at all levels and evident in practice throughout the school. Leaders and teachers have carefully designed the school environment to support pupils' emotional and behavioural needs very effectively. For example, there are well-resourced and accessible 'breakout' spaces and equipment in classrooms for pupils to use when they need to regulate their emotions.
- Behaviour plans are extremely detailed and reviewed regularly. There is a clear

focus, both in the plans and in the practice in every classroom, on prevention and de-escalation of problem behaviour. Any physical intervention is seen as a last resort and used rarely. Staff use a range of very effective strategies to manage behaviour, applied consistently throughout the school, such as visual schedules, timers, objects of reference and symbols. This means that pupils understand what is expected of them and behave appropriately.

- The classroom environment is calm and purposeful. All incidences of challenging behaviour are dealt with rapidly and without fuss by staff, following the principles in the school's policy. Pupils are taught to manage their own behaviour and regulate their own emotions. This means that very little learning time is lost and pupils learn to behave extremely well, despite their very complex needs. Incidences of and triggers for challenging behaviour are analysed in detail to identify the very best support for pupils. Over the last two years, incidences of challenging behaviour and the use of physical intervention have reduced dramatically. This is due to the very strong ethos and consistent practice by all staff.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- assessment systems are reviewed and developed further in light of the national changes to assessment.

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

Yours sincerely

Charlotte Millward
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with both senior and middle leaders. We visited all classrooms in the school, in conjunction with the middle leader for teaching and learning. We met with groups of parents, staff and pupils. Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation relating to the curriculum, pupil progress information and analysis, behaviour logs and data relating to attendance. Inspectors met with the member of staff responsible for safeguarding and reviewed a range of safeguarding documentation. There were no responses to the pupil survey. Inspectors considered the responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents) and the staff questionnaire.