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Mrs Nicola Partridge
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Dear Mrs Partridge

Short inspection of Meadowbrook College

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 2018 with Ross MacDonald, Lise Sugden and Joanna Yates, Ofsted Inspectors, 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 good in May 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Under your strong and dedicated leadership, you have implemented many successful changes which have enabled pupils to make positive strides in developing their social, emotional and academic skills.

Pupils who join your school often have complex needs, many have had negative experiences of school. Several of the pupils that inspectors spoke to had only been in your school a short time, all were positive about the welcome and kindness they had received.

The ethos of Meadowbrook College is based on helping pupils develop their self-esteem and achieve success. Your staff excel in developing these skills. Pupils say that staff at this school really care about their well-being. In lessons, pupils behave well and have positive attitudes towards their work.

Parents are pleased with the school. They commented that they were happy with the support and encouragement that their children receive. One said, 'For the first time in years my child wants to get up and come to school; he comes home with a smile on his face.' Parents praised the therapy support that is provided, with one saying how it has improved their child's 'mental attitude'. Your school offers a range of effective therapies for pupils, including pet therapy.

Your school rightly prides itself on developing the creative skills of pupils. Corridors and classrooms are vibrant with displays of pupils' work. Work seen during the inspection showed that some pupils have exceptional artistic and photographic skills. In many cases this is due to staff giving pupils the confidence to succeed.

You have rightly identified the areas that you still need to address in order to improve the school further. These include ensuring that the English and mathematics curriculum in key stages 1 to 3 is always well matched to the needs of learners. You also know that the school's tracking system for a few subjects is still developing. Therefore, pupils do not always have a clear enough understanding of their progress in these subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils say that they feel safe at the school, they know who to go to if they have any concerns. Staff work closely together across the different sites, ensuring that, whatever the issue, pupils receive the right support quickly. Staff are able to identify and support those who are at risk of harm. Pupils are actively taught about how to keep safe, including e-safety when online. They know about the dangers associated with drugs, alcohol and nicotine.

There are good links with a range of outside agencies, including a school nurse who is regularly on site. Other care professionals keep in regular contact to ensure that pupils' needs are met effectively.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality. All staff have undergone a comprehensive programme of safeguarding training. The recent safeguarding audit by the local authority was positive and showed that all the correct procedures are followed.

Inspection findings

- We agreed to look at the impact of leaders on school improvement. We found that at all sites you have instilled in staff high expectations for pupils to succeed. Staff appreciate the opportunities that are provided for professional development. This includes the useful training they have received in helping them to accurately assess each pupil's academic, personal and social needs when they enter the school.
- We looked at the impact of the trustees on school improvement. We found that the trustees have a range of experience in finance, education, and business, and are well able to hold the school to account. When inspectors arrived on site there were several aspects related to the website that were not compliant with the Department for Education's requirements for academy schools. Trustees were fully aware of the problem. The website is new, and while information from the old website had been transferred across by the site's developers, it was difficult for school staff to upload new information. During the course of the inspection

this was urgently addressed and the website now includes all the necessary information.

- During our visit we examined how the school ensured that pupils make good progress. We found that leaders are using a system of tracking that clearly identifies the progress pupils are making. It is clear that leaders use this to quickly put in place additional support for those who are falling behind. Most pupils at the four school sites were seen to be making good progress across most subjects. However, for a few subjects the school's tracking system is in its infancy and does not provide pupils with a clear enough understanding about how they are progressing.
- An area of focus during the inspection was the attendance of pupils. You are acutely aware of the implications of pupils being absent. You work hard with a range of agencies to ensure that pupils attend well. Many of your pupils have had considerable periods out of school. You and your team monitor attendance very carefully and action taken as a result has improved attendance across all sites.
- We agreed to look at the impact of the curriculum on pupils' academic progress. The school offers a variety of programmes and short courses that suit the needs of pupils well. Your programme of reintegration is effective and enables pupils to develop the skills to succeed in their next setting. In key stage 4 you provide a broad range of accreditations from entry level to GCSE qualifications. Due to staff having high expectations of pupils' abilities, there has been a steady trend of improvement in the number of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs. However, in key stages 1 to 3, the work provided is not always well matched to pupils' abilities in English and mathematics, and this can have an impact on progress.
- During the inspection we considered the impact of the curriculum on improving pupils' personal progress. This is a strength of your school. Social and emotional skills are very effectively developed because you provide each pupil with a tailored programme designed to re-engage them and help them to succeed. From the friendly communal breakfast to the end of the day, staff work tirelessly to develop pupils' self-belief and help them achieve success, often for the first time in many years. Pupils say that they really enjoy the new experiences you provide. For example, they spoke with pride about how they enjoyed making a cooked lunch for the rest of the school.
- We looked at how well pupils are prepared for their future lives. Most pupils who were spoken to had a clear idea about their future paths. This is because the leadership team ensures that pupils have useful careers education and work-experience opportunities. Pupils benefit from using the school's well-equipped vocational classrooms to develop their skills in subjects such as construction or hair and beauty. You are rightly proud that almost every pupil who leaves the school goes into further training, education or employment.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the curriculum in English and mathematics in key stages 1 to 3 is always well matched to pupils' needs and is sufficiently challenging to allow pupils to make greater progress
- pupils have a clearer understanding about how they are doing in the few subjects where the school's progress tracking system is still developing.

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

Yours sincerely

Liz Bowes
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, members of your senior leadership team and the chair of trustees. We visited all four of the school's sites, together with a couple of other locations where pupils were receiving education. We took into consideration five responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View. There were 33 responses to the staff questionnaire which were also considered. We visited classes, spoke to pupils and looked in their books. A range of school documentation was checked, including: leaders' evaluation of the school's performance and plans for further improvement; records of assessment and behaviour; the single central record of pre-employment checks; policies and procedures; and minutes of trustees' meetings.