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Ms Anna Smakowska
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Smakowska

Short inspection of Woodlands School

Following my visit to the school on 6 February 2018 with Keith Tysoe, 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 2013.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The governing body provides clear strategic leadership and offers firm support and challenge to you and your staff.

You have established a calm and purposeful school that reflects your commitment to providing the very best for your pupils. Highly effective teaching across the school has enabled pupils to learn skills that are then widely applied in the local community.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about their school and report a sense of pride in being part of Woodlands School. They feel that they have the support of school leaders, agreeing that the school is well managed. One member of support staff reported that, 'Here I can truly say it is all about the team. Everyone is in tune.'

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. Parents feel that the school provides a safe environment for their children and the school makes relevant use of outside agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe out of school. Leaders are acutely aware of the particular safeguarding issues that relate to their pupils. Staff remain confident and competent in keeping pupils safe and healthy at all times due to the comprehensive training programme that is in place.

When pupils start at Woodlands, leaders are quick to make safeguarding expectations clear to parents and establish strong relationships that help keep pupils safe as they progress through the school.

Leaders are persistent in dealing with safeguarding concerns and where necessary will escalate and play a lead role when working with other professionals.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed the key lines of enquiry. This inspection focused on the impact of leaders' actions, particularly the effectiveness of the curriculum at meeting pupils' needs. I also looked at how leaders use assessment information to ensure that pupils make strong progress across the curriculum. Lastly, I focused on pupils' attendance.
- Governors and leaders demonstrate a deep understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They have used this to develop a realistic yet ambitious improvement plan that builds on the school's strengths.
- Senior leaders monitor the impact of interventions rigorously. This is through observation, scrutiny of progress information and talking to families and pupils. As a result, even though you have made some large-scale changes across the school, standards have continued to rise. These developments include a new assessment toolkit, curriculum and school building.
- Leaders have drawn from the expertise of a range of professionals and families to craft a highly personalised curriculum. Pupils are independent and confident because there are established routines and they know what is expected of them. This is promoted by teaching assistants, who provide a skilful balance of support and challenge.
- Staff follow a comprehensive transition plan for all pupils when they join and move on from your school. This means that the new placement is fully prepared to meet each pupil's needs. You have developed a curriculum that provides opportunities for pupils to develop the skills and knowledge that helps them to thrive in their new school.
- Over time, the needs of your pupils have become more complex and you recognise that as a result of this, you will need to further develop your approach to supporting pupils who have additional communication needs. Currently, there are some missed opportunities for pupils to develop speaking skills both in and out of lessons.
- Leaders at all levels share your ambition and enthusiasm and are very effective in their work. They frequently and accurately track pupils' progress in a range of subjects, including personal and social development.
- Work to introduce an innovative new assessment system is well under way, and this is driven by your relentless focus on improving pupils' outcomes. Your senior and middle leaders are continuing to refine this system. They are working closely with other schools to ensure that teachers' assessments are accurate and that targets are aspirational.
- Intelligent use of data enables leaders to provide additional support for pupils who fall behind. This results in very high proportions of pupils making significant

and sustained progress across the curriculum. Support staff are proficient at evaluating learning and identifying next steps because they are clear about the long-term aims for each pupil.

- Attendance is better than in some similar schools and is improving year on year. However, for an emerging group of pupils with additional medical needs, leaders could work more closely with families and other professionals to support pupils to return to school sooner.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all pupils have opportunities for more spontaneous communication that would allow them to further develop their speaking skills
- the impact of health-related absence is minimised so that all pupils continue to make exceptional progress.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for Harrow. 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 team inspector on a series of short visits to 13 lessons. The inspection team held discussions with different leaders about safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, the curriculum, and measuring pupils' progress. Meetings were held with the chair and four other governors, a group of staff, parents and middle leaders. We also spoke to a group of pupils. The inspection team worked with senior leaders to scrutinise pupils' work and information on pupils' progress. The inspectors looked at a range of documentation. This included self-evaluation, the improvement plan, attendance data, records of pupils' progress and behaviour, and evidence of records to keep pupils' safe. The inspectors considered 60 responses to the staff survey, and 16 responses to the parent survey.