

23 April 2018

Ms Caroline Murphy
Acting Headteacher
Orchardside School
230 Bullsmoor Lane
Enfield
EN1 4RL

Dear Ms Murphy

Short inspection of Orchardside School

Following my visit to the school on 14 March 2018 with Jo Jones, 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 February 2013.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of outstanding as a result of this inspection.**

You have led the school through a period of significant change in the past few months. The headteacher has left the school and the planned move to your new premises has been more complex than anticipated. However, you have made sure that the actions aimed at improving the school have remained focused on accurately evaluated priorities. Governors have ensured that you receive strong support and challenge from the local authority and an independent consultant. This is sustaining the capacity in leadership as you continue to tackle the challenges ahead. For example, the new school is yet to be fully completed and you recognise that some pupils' attendance in the current year has declined.

During the inspection, leaders were able to demonstrate the rigour with which they check on the impact of the teachers' work on pupils' outcomes. You are rightly proud of the typically strong relations which exist between staff and pupils. Leaders have ensured that most pupils continue to sustain progress in a wide range of subjects from when they join the school, despite their often complex needs. However, you have identified some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in mathematics and science, which you have well-considered plans to tackle.

Leaders have had some success in responding to the area for improvement identified at the school's last inspection. You are preparing pupils for the next stage of their education more effectively. Teachers help many rediscover the importance

of learning after often extended periods of disengagement with education before their admission. Your new premises have been designed with strengthening the curriculum in mind. Leaders have developed productive links with further education and training providers.

Pupils and staff are broadly positive about leaders' work. However, some express concerns about the behaviour of pupils. The range and extent of the needs of some pupils continue to challenge the skills of staff. You know that the quality of support and training you provide for them must be expertly planned and its impact rigorously monitored.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose and understood by staff. You have used the support and challenge provided by the local authority to further strengthen the quality of safeguarding records. The recently appointed leader for safeguarding is having a rapid impact on ensuring that the curriculum enables pupils to recognise and tackle predominant threats to their well-being. For example, pupils are enabled to discuss issues surrounding child sexual exploitation frankly and reflectively.

Pupils told me that they are encouraged to 'speak their minds'. They told me that, with regard to safety, they particularly appreciate learning from people they can identify with and who may have had similar experiences to their own. You use well-established links with other services, such as the police, to support your safeguarding arrangements.

Inspection findings

- We agreed that a focus for this inspection should be the consistency of the quality of teaching in English and mathematics. Our observations and scrutiny of pupils' work indicated teachers' successes in ensuring that pupils try hard with their work. Despite the wide range of pupils' needs, they commit to learning in lessons and sustain progress. Teachers accurately assess pupils' starting points and provide effective support which motivates them. They have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. The proportion of pupils attaining a GCSE qualification increased in 2017. Many pupils were well off track with their learning before they joined your school.
- Your own checks on teaching and tracking of pupils' progress show that the teaching of mathematics and science is not as strong in some classes as in others. Some pupils told me that they found teachers of English come across as more enthusiastic and easier to understand. You are tackling these variations and have well-considered plans to provide further training and support for staff who would benefit.
- We also decided to focus on how effectively the school is preparing pupils for the next stage of their education or training. Your new premises include space and facilities which were lacking at the school's previous location. However, not all of these are available yet because some parts of the premises are yet to be

completed. You have also strengthened links with a local college so that pupils are able to pursue their interests more fully and better discover the options on offer after the age of 16. As a result, nearly all of your Year 11 pupils in 2017 progressed into employment, education or training. Teachers keep the curriculum under review to ensure that it continues to help prepare pupils effectively for their future lives. For example, physical education teachers are planning to offer a BTEC National Diploma route to a qualification in this subject. They have realised the GCSE course has become too theoretical for some pupils.

- Pupils enjoy frequent opportunities to discuss their progress and future options with a member of staff identified as their key worker. However, some pupils thought these discussions could focus more sharply on careers and training.
- Finally, we looked into the quality of support you are offering pupils as their range of needs on admission become increasingly wide and complex. This is leading to greater challenges for teachers in helping pupils to develop positive attitudes and behave acceptably.
- Staff have worked effectively to help you reverse an upsurge in fixed term exclusions in the first part of the current school year. Teachers and pupils demonstrate mutual respect and a sense of purposeful learning is typical in lessons as a result. However, some staff and pupils express concerns about the impact of very challenging behaviour on the life of the school. You recognise that plans for training need to be continuously reviewed so that teachers can help pupils more effectively. You are also aware that the attendance of some pupils has declined because it is more difficult and takes longer for them to travel to your new site. Governors are very clear about this challenge and working hard with you to think of ways to overcome these obstacles.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' attendance continues to improve, and leaders evaluate the impact of this on outcomes
- leaders and governors listen and respond to staff's views about their training to help improve the behaviour of pupils with complex needs
- leaders remain sharply focused on improving the consistency of teaching, particularly in mathematics and science in some year groups.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Wright
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we met with you and other senior leaders, a group of teaching staff and some pupils who serve on the school council. You and other leaders, including the consultant who works with you each week, joined us for observations in lessons. We looked at a range of pupils' work and scrutinised a range of documents relating to safeguarding, pupils' outcomes, attendance and school improvement. Inspectors also considered eight responses to the staff questionnaire. There were no responses to the online Parent View survey.