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8 May 2018

Mr Mark Armstrong
Critchill School
Nunney Road
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Dear Mr Armstrong

Short inspection of Critchill School

Following my visit to the school on 24 April 2018 with Andrew Brown, 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 good in September 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

All staff are proud to be members of the school. They readily participate in developing improvements in small teams or as individuals. A key member of the school team is Dolly, the school's dog. She is, as was her predecessor, a vital part of the therapeutic and sensory work for some pupils.

Good use is made of the on-site hydrotherapy pool. Adults use it to help pupils exercise at the same time as developing other skills such as counting and identifying different colours. The activities undertaken are delivered and overseen by a range of experienced professionals, including external consultants such as physiotherapists.

You are aware that the sixth-form cabin is not of the same quality as other buildings in the school. You and the governing body have 'patched it up' over the years. Staff try to make the best of the accommodation. However, we agreed that it does not set the right ambience for learning and socialising in the sixth form.

At the previous inspection, school leaders were asked to improve pupils' attendance. The school was also asked to provide more opportunities for students to have work experience to ensure that they learn the skills needed for employment. You and other school leaders have worked hard to improve these aspects of the school's work. The attendance of those who have been persistently absent has improved. In addition, students have more work-based opportunities.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff know what to do and where to go if they have any concerns. Staff receive regular, appropriate, up-to-date training. Pupils are safe and secure in lessons and at social times due to high levels of supervision.

Pupils are confident when using the hydrotherapy pool that staff will help keep them safe and support them. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and monitored. The single central record is complete and up to date.

Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry considered how well older pupils and students develop the skills needed for their future employability. Until relatively recently, much of the work experience was conducted within the school such as grounds maintenance work, shopping, working with Frome Rangers, using the allotment, and caring for the hens. A new venture is the Critchill School catering van. Here, students shop at a wholesaler warehouse at the beginning of the week, prepare and package the food, and then sell it at Frome market. They undertake externally accredited courses in hygiene and health and safety, and gain the skills that enable them to gain meaningful paid employment. This sort of activity also helps pupils and students to be understood and known in the local community, developing their social skills and reducing potential isolation when they leave school. Since the implementation of the Working Futures programme, the school is making more use of external placements. The school rightly has as a priority to further develop the post-16 offer through supported internships and apprenticeships with local employers.
- Next, we checked to see whether children, pupils and students attend school as often as they can. You and the parent family support adviser continue to make school attendance a priority, with careful tracking and monitoring. As a result of changes to the curriculum, attendance has improved. Weak excuses from families are not sanctioned. However, the complex healthcare needs of many children and young people across the school mean that there are times where medical needs and illness cause them to be absent. On these occasions, you and your staff work closely with the medical professionals to help support families through what are often difficult and distressing times.
- The third line of enquiry focused on how effective and accurate the school's systems and processes for measuring children's, pupils' and students' achievement are. You ensure that achievement and rates of progress are accurate by regularly checking them across the school along with other external professionals and leaders from other schools.
- In recent months, staff have been trialling a new electronic recording system. As a result, parents and carers can see what, and how well, their children are doing in school. They are able to share their children's learning journeys, and see their individual plans and progress grids. As well as seeing work completed in school,

parents can also send in photographs of activities accomplished by their children when they are at home. This initiative has great potential to increase the involvement of parents in their children's education and will enable staff to have an even more rounded understanding of the children and young people in their care.

- The final line of enquiry focused on how well the curriculum enables children and pupils to reach their potential. Pupils engage in a wide range of artistic, sporting and cultural opportunities that promote self-esteem and confidence. You ensure that you analyse the strengths and specific needs for each child, pupil or young person. Since 2016, leaders are using this analysis and linking it with the individual's education, health and care plan to produce an individualised personal learning intention map (PLIM). These are reviewed three times a year to identify the priority learning areas and the progress being made, and to set challenging targets for the personal, social, emotional and academic development of each individual. As a result, pupils' learning, social and emotional needs are met well.
- The outside area is not as inviting as the inside of the buildings. The outside area contains some climbing equipment, but it does not support or develop the sensory needs of pupils and young people as well as it could. In addition, there are some trip hazards that need to be reviewed and amended. Along with the sixth-form building, the use of external areas would benefit from an impact analysis on pupils' and students' achievements.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they develop the work already started to utilise modern technology to further enhance the communication systems used in the school
- they continue to build on the school's work experience and preparation for adulthood and the specialist curriculum introduced for a few pupils
- the quality of the sixth-form provision and the outdoor areas are improved.

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

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

We agreed the timetable and activities for the day. We worked extensively together and with other senior leaders throughout the day. We met with other leaders and members of the governing body. We talked with representatives of the local authority on the telephone. We scrutinised the quality of children's, pupils' and students' work, talking to them and observing them during the day.

We took account of the 15 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. The 12 responses by staff to Ofsted's electronic questionnaire were considered. There were no responses by pupils to Ofsted's electronic questionnaire. In addition, we took note of the school's questionnaires completed by pupils, parents and staff.

We considered a wide range of documentary evidence, including records relating to safeguarding, pupils' attendance, assessment, the school's self-evaluation and its improvement plan.