

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



25 May 2018

Miss Simone Hopkins
Head of School
New Horizons School
Beauchamp Road
St Leonards-on-Sea
East Sussex
TN38 9JU

Dear Miss Hopkins

Short inspection of New Horizons School

Following my visit to the school on 25 April 2018 with Andrew Hogarth, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be outstanding in July 2014.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, your leadership team and staff share a passion to ensure that your pupils have the capacity to lead successful lives. You have high aspirations for all your pupils. Through your determined leadership, you have created a community where leaders and staff are committed to ensuring the best outcomes for pupils, many of whom have had negative experiences of education in their previous schools.

Parents and carers are delighted with the school and the difference it has made to their children's well-being and progress. All who responded to Ofsted's survey, Parent View, would recommend the school to other parents. One parent said: 'The teachers are dedicated and passionate about giving the children the best possible education and this comes through in their teaching. They make it fun.' The pupils are also positive about the school and enjoy their lessons. In our joint lesson observations, we noticed that all pupils participated in learning with enthusiasm and dynamism. Pupils' books show the pride they have in their work and their commitment to achieving the best they can.

The local advisory board, providing governance for the school, is a highly skilled team. Its members have extensive experience in education, which they employ very effectively when guiding the school. Governors are extremely supportive. They share the ambitions of leaders and staff, while providing a high level of challenge. They recognise the very positive impact of your inspirational leadership, not just on New Horizons, but also on the development of other schools within the multi-

academy trust (MAT).

At the last inspection of the predecessor school, inspectors highlighted the school's many strengths. They also recommended improvements to teaching so that the most able pupils in key stages 2 and 3 are challenged to make more rapid progress, particularly in mathematics. In response, you have very successfully ensured that all pupils are supported and stretched to achieve the highest levels they can in all subjects, including mathematics. This approach extends to those taking accredited courses. The report from the predecessor school also identified that the rate of improvement in pupils' attendance needed to increase. The school has worked relentlessly to reduce absence and current attendance figures show that the level of absence is reducing over time. Where attendance causes concern, pupils are monitored closely. Pastoral leaders work exceptionally well with families and outside agencies to support targeted pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a very strong safeguarding culture within the school. Leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Training is thorough and up to date, so staff have a clear understanding of current legislation, guidance and their responsibilities. This ensures that staff are proactive in dealing with any safeguarding concerns. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe when online. This enables them to make positive choices in their use of the internet and social media sites when they are home. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy coming to school and know who to speak to if they have any concerns.

Parents also expressed confidence in the school's safeguarding practice and appreciate the commitment of staff. Parents who spoke to inspectors feel that the school keeps their children safe. The school has strong links with outside agencies and works in close and effective collaboration with them to provide bespoke support for parents. As a result, parents can provide the guidance their children need.

Inspection findings

- The school is part of the SABDEN Multi-Academy Trust and you collaborate effectively with the other schools within the MAT. Leaders at different levels from these schools meet regularly to develop systems for the MAT, and training is organised centrally. There is a teaching school within the MAT and your assistant headteacher oversees all newly qualified teachers in the schools. It is clear that not only has your school benefited from being part of this supportive network, but your leaders make a valuable contribution to the work of the MAT.
- Leaders have a clear, robust approach to the assessment of pupils. Prior to starting at New Horizons, pupils have often had a turbulent experience of education. Leaders and staff take the time to ensure that they gain a highly detailed understanding of each new pupil's individual needs and circumstances, thus enabling an exceptionally smooth transition into the school.

- Leaders carefully assess pupils on arrival to establish their starting points accurately. They use this information well to devise individual targets for pupils that are both achievable and ambitious. The school's most recent assessment tracking information shows that pupils generally make very strong progress.
- You and your leadership team have devised a highly bespoke curriculum for key stage 2 pupils, 'Academic, Literacy Personalised' (ALP). This equips pupils with the skills they need to become competent learners. The ALP curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to participate in outdoor education and practical sessions, as well as access to learning in core subjects. Pupils engage fully with the opportunities and experiences provided through this well-planned curriculum. As a result, pupils show positive attitudes to learning which, in turn, assist them in achieving their academic targets.
- At key stage 4, your curriculum, referred to as 'Strengths and Ambition', is designed to prepare pupils for their future lives. Each year, the choices offered at key stage 4 depend on the specific needs and interests of the cohort of pupils. At the end of Year 9 pupils attend events designed to introduce them to possible careers. Your leaders expertly take pupils' career aspirations into account when designing their personalised learning. This ensures that pupils' courses prepare them for their future pathways in education or training. Prior to this, Years 9 and 10 pupils take part in a thoughtfully planned, residential activity week. This helps pupils to not only learn valuable skills but ensures a successful transition into key stage 4.
- The school places great emphasis on studying academic subjects, and all pupils take accredited courses. This enables the most able pupils to progress onto level 3 courses. As a result, all pupils leave with qualifications appropriate to their ability. Your staff team work tirelessly with parents and providers to ensure that all pupils progress confidently to the next stage of their education or training.
- Your leadership team have astutely identified that pupils would benefit even further from bespoke therapies to improve their resilience and enhance their emotional well-being. You have carefully considered plans in place to achieve this, including the appointment of new staff dedicated to this goal.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is exceptional. They understand what is required, and when they need to, pupils can use the strategies they have been taught to regulate their own behaviour. Comprehensive behaviour management training enables all staff to deal with incidents very effectively. When there is challenging behaviour, staff work to quickly de-escalate the situation and restore calm. This approach is successful, and the number of exclusions and repeat exclusions has fallen. You also use rewards particularly well. Your carefully balanced approach to managing pupils' behaviour has contributed to improved attendance. In addition, you have recently introduced the role of prefect, so that older pupils can set a good example for younger pupils. The prefects told the inspectors that they feel proud to be part of the school, one commenting, 'They give you the education you need.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- plans to build pupils' resilience and emotional well-being are swiftly implemented and fully embedded.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for East Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Susan Conway
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, my colleague and I met with you, the executive headteacher, the school's leadership team and the chair of the board of trustees for the MAT. I also spoke on the telephone to your school improvement partner. We visited classes in all the key stages to observe pupils' learning, talk with pupils about their progress, and look at their books. All lesson observations were conducted jointly with members of the leadership team. We spoke to members of the school council and talked to a small number of parents. We looked at the six responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View, and reviewed the responses to Ofsted's surveys from 42 pupils and 27 members of staff. We looked at a range of documentation, including information about: the work of governors; safeguarding; the curriculum; and assessment. We examined the school's analysis of pupils' progress and attainment, leaders' self-evaluation and their plans for improvement.