

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



1 June 2018

Mrs Gill Jackson
Head of Education
The St Aubyn Centre Education Department
The St Aubyn Centre
2 Boxted Road
Colchester
Essex
CO4 5HG

Dear Mrs Jackson

Short inspection of The St Aubyn Centre Education Department

Following my visit to the school on 16 May 2018 with Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop HMI, 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 November 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 continue to provide inspirational leadership. You have strengthened leadership by appointing a highly effective deputy headteacher, whom you rightly regard as incredibly strong, and further developing the role of middle leaders to ensure that the education department continues to provide outstanding education. The deputy headteacher models best practice in teaching and promotes a strong ethos for outstanding teaching and learning. Teachers maintain excellent relationships with pupils and have a deep understanding of their mental health needs. They show the utmost care and respect for each individual. As a result, pupils develop excellent attitudes to learning.

You have successfully met the area for improvement identified at the last inspection by developing and implementing a unique system of assessment which clearly shows how pupils are progressing. Leaders have developed excellent teamwork with health professionals and extremely close working relationships with parents. The education centre has received national recognition for best practice in working with parents. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the work of the education centre. One parent wrote, 'I can't praise this school enough for helping my child to achieve examination success.'

Leaders at all levels have brought about continuous improvement since the last inspection and are clearly demonstrating the capacity to develop further. Leaders have established the school as a centre of excellence in the training of teachers

from local schools in mental health issues. This training is highly regarded by local schools and prepares mainstream staff well in ensuring smooth and successful transition of pupils from the centre into school. Leaders have also ensured that provision for art has improved significantly where it is now promoted across the curriculum. Pupils' high-quality artwork is put on public display for people to appreciate and admire. Staff promote pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, exceptionally well. As a result, pupils rapidly grow in confidence, and improve their behaviour and attendance extremely well.

Your self-evaluation rightly judges the work of the education centre as outstanding, although your accurate view of the outstanding features is not consistently linked to pupil outcomes such as learning and progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, staff and the management committee work extremely closely with hospital staff, parents and outside agencies in promoting a strong culture of safeguarding. Risk assessments are thorough and include checks on the roadworthiness of cars used to transport pupils, assessment of any potential risk in the classroom or when out on visits and follow-up reviews of the effectiveness of risk assessments. The multidisciplinary team meets every morning to carefully consider the safety and well-being of each pupil. All information of a safeguarding nature disclosed by pupils to education or medical staff is immediately shared at this meeting to enable staff to respond swiftly to any concern.

Pupils stay safe, move from the ward to classrooms safely and handle equipment safely in classrooms. Pupils and parents believe that bullying and any form of prejudicial behaviour is rare. All training in safeguarding and child protection is up to date, and all staff completed training in positive handling just before this inspection.

Inspection findings

- To see whether the school remains outstanding, I wanted to determine how well teachers are using the new assessment system to ensure that pupils are making the best possible progress. This was an area for improvement identified at the previous inspection. You initiated a new assessment system and secured funding to develop a computer system that can be used at a national level. Leaders have continued to develop this unique and pioneering system of assessment to determine each pupil's mental health and learning needs. This system is already held in very high regard in the field of mental health and is currently being piloted in six similar establishments. Staff use this system to provide very detailed initial assessments in a short space of time when pupils are admitted to the centre.
- They use this assessment information well to set precise targets and strategies in pupils' individual education plans. As a result, learning is highly personalised and subject leaders meticulously record evidence of progress against these highly personalised targets. The exemplary nature of this process contributes to the

rapid and secure progress that pupils make in the relatively short period of time they spend in the centre.

- I also wanted to find out how the curriculum is ensuring that pupils sustain their destinations when they leave the centre because there was little information about this on the centre's website. All pupils receive high-quality independent careers advice based on their mental health need, aspirations and length of stay at the centre. This leads to carefully planned destinations which are likely to be sustainable. The engagement mentor then makes periodic follow-up telephone calls with providers to ensure that pupils' placements are sustained.
- Transition arrangements are thorough and very effective, with excellent programmes to reintegrate pupils into mainstream schools. Where pupils are not on roll at a school or college, alternative education providers, such as The Prince's Trust, are used very effectively as an interim before courses begin for the next academic year. As a result, most pupils successfully return to their mainstream schools. The staff also support pupils, where appropriate, in writing curriculum vitae, applying for apprenticeships and looking at college or university choices. Parents are kept fully informed about the careers advice and guidance that their children receive. Of the 19 pupils who left Longview ward in the spring term, only a very small number did not go on to education, training or employment.
- Finally, I wanted to know how effectively the management committee is monitoring and challenging the work of the education department to ensure continuous improvement. This was because some aspects of the website did not to comply with requirements. Members of the management committee provide strong support and challenge for the work of the education centre to sustain the highest quality of provision. They oversee the arrangements for managing staff performance well. They visit the education department and look carefully at data to secure an accurate view of the school and influence priorities for further improvement. They ensured that leaders quickly rectified the few shortcomings in the website during this inspection.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- self-evaluation makes clear links between the outstanding features of the education department's provision in sustaining the highest-quality outcomes for pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Declan McCarthy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, we met with you, other school leaders, health professionals and four members of the management committee. We undertook joint visits with senior leaders to the teaching areas on the wards to look at the impact of teaching and assessment on pupils' learning. We looked at samples of pupils' work over time. We talked to pupils about their learning and the progress they were making. We considered the views of parents by holding telephone discussions and looking at the small number of text responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also looked at the eight online questionnaire responses from pupils and the seven staff questionnaire returns. We looked at a range of documentation, including: minutes of management committee meetings; the self-evaluation document and school improvement plan; safeguarding policies and procedures; the single central record of checks made on the suitability of staff to work with pupils; attendance figures; records of behaviour; the information about the progress that pupils are making and destinations of pupils when they leave.