

6 June 2018

Joanne Simons
Headteacher
South Somerset Partnership School
Dampier Street
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BA21 4EN

Dear Miss Simons

Short inspection of South Somerset Partnership School

Following my visit to the school on 17 May 2018 with Andrew Penman, 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.

You are successfully working to bring the various centres that make up The South Somerset Partnership together. You know exactly what you are aiming for, 'one school, one purpose'. Your enthusiasm to achieve this shines through. Our learning walk demonstrated your focus on expecting the very best for pupils. You make sure that expectations are high. Lessons are about learning and trying your best. The learning environment is filled with positive prompts and messages to pupils.

You and your staff ensure that pupils receive good-quality social and emotional support. Staff are skilled at intervening and coming up with deviations to ensure that pupils are able to manage their emotions and stress levels for most of the time. As a result, pupils who in previous schools achieved poorly are now finding their areas of strengths and becoming more successful learners. You engage with a wide range of alternative providers to ensure that pupils can develop their interests and skills in a safe environment. Pupils have clear pathways to take them forward to education, employment or training that matches their interests and aspirations.

A real strength is your ability to draw on others for advice. This has allowed you to strengthen the school's systems. For example, you now have a robust system to check on pupils' progress. This shows that pupils across the school are generally making good, and sometimes very good progress from their starting points. Due to this system being very recent, not all leaders are comfortably using it to describe

the progress within their areas of responsibility.

A recommendation at the previous inspection was to ensure that pupils who have education, health and care plans move on to appropriate future placements. You are working in close partnership with the local authority to create successful opportunities for pupils. However, you ensure that there is no complacency. Together with the local authority, you have engaged in a special project to support pupils who are waiting for other placements. As a result, pupils, on the whole, enjoy their learning and make good progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. You and your leadership team ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The designated safeguarding lead has a thorough understanding of the issues that pupils and their families face. She skilfully uses her broad knowledge of safeguarding issues and draws in a wide range of agencies. Training for staff is thorough and robust. The management group member who has responsibility for safeguarding fulfils the role with rigour. For example, he conducts unannounced visits and checks on safeguarding issues, including asking staff about their understanding.

Pupils enjoy school and you have put much work into helping pupils to attend well. Many show a marked improvement in their attendance compared to their time at other schools. Pupils feel safe and they are safe. There is, on the whole, an orderly environment across all sites in which to learn. There are occasional lapses, particularly in key stage 4, where some pupils showed some weaker attitudes. For example, some used poor language, which staff failed to challenge.

Inspection findings

- We looked carefully at some particular issues to see how successfully the school is tackling them. We explored how well you and your leadership team are raising standards in reading and writing. We also explored how well leaders ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently good across the different school sites.
- You set high expectations. You expect learning to be interesting, relevant and fun. As a result, pupils learn to apply their skills while doing practical activities that they enjoy. For example, we watched a group of pupils working together and learning about science while making ice cream. Pupils' writing books show that staff use this interesting curriculum to help pupils to develop their writing knowledge.
- Subject leaders work effectively across the school sites to support colleagues. The new assessment system is helping to create a 'golden thread' through the different key stages. However, leaders do not confidently use the assessment information to explore any weaknesses in achievement in their subject areas.
- Leaders are working successfully to ensure that pupils' writing develops well as they move through the school. A further development has been to ensure that

every lesson has a very clear objective, which is based on what pupils need next in their learning. Staff refer to this throughout lessons and this helps to keep the focus of lessons on learning.

- You have ensured that expectations are equally high in reading. There are good-quality books around the school to enjoy and this helps to create a culture of reading for pleasure. Staff read to and with pupils. Pupils regularly read aloud. Signs and symbols around the classroom walls, which staff refer to throughout lessons, are other ways in which staff successfully help pupils to develop their reading skills.
- Supported well by the area management group, you create a positive atmosphere for learners and this extends across the different sites. A strength is your continuing reflection on what works and what needs to develop further. You are ambitious for pupils and staff.
- There is a strong emphasis on professional development and working together as a team to support each other to improve. You and your leadership team provide challenge through feedback to staff. This range of reflection, positive development and challenge ensures that the quality of teaching and learning continues to improve.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the new assessment information is used consistently by all staff, and particularly subject leaders, to drive further improvements to the quality of teaching and learning
- staff challenge any lapses in pupils' attitudes so that behaviour is consistently good at all sites.

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

Yours sincerely

Tonwen Empson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors visited a range of the school sites, including visits to the alternative providers used by the school. We observed learning at the sites alongside senior leaders. We looked at a range of pupils' workbooks and folders. A meeting took place with the area management group. A meeting also took place with a representative of the local authority.

We scrutinised a range of school documents, including the school's evaluation of its effectiveness, the school development plan and information about the progress that pupils are making. A range of safeguarding and attendance information was taken into account. A meeting took place with the designated safeguarding lead and the management group member who is responsible for safeguarding.

There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, although a comment made on the free-text service was taken into account. The 35 views provided on an online staff survey were also considered.