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Mrs Jan Barlow
Acting Principal
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Dear Mrs Barlow

Short inspection of Chaigeley School

Following my visit to the school on 27 June 2018 with Sue Eastwood 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 good in January 2016.

This school continues to be good.

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

As acting principal, you have worked quickly to improve the school and develop a strong and collaborative staff team. Your insistence on sharing responsibilities for leadership has ensured that the senior team know the school well and make a valuable contribution to school improvement. Pupils are offered good-quality learning and are making good progress. The caring and supportive ethos within the school shines through. Staff go the extra mile to make sure that all pupils receive the support they need to make at least good personal and academic progress. You have created a culture where positive relationships are the foundation of the school. Pupils clearly enjoy their school and are thriving. They talked enthusiastically about life in school and all the wider experiences they enjoy, including walking up Snowdon, mountain biking, golf and having rice pudding for lunch on a Wednesday.

Since the last inspection, you have invested in resources to support pupils to regulate their own behaviour. Therapists are available to work one to one with pupils or in small groups, where they are helped to understand their feelings. They learn how to manage their emotions and, therefore, their actions. During the inspection, pupils expressed what they were feeling and made the right choices to keep themselves calm and safe, for example to explain that they were anxious and asking to sit in the 'quiet space' for a few minutes.

Pupils are happy to sit together at break and lunchtime and chat among

themselves. Some pupils prefer to sit and talk with the staff. The older pupils enjoyed some independent social time where staff supervised them from a respectful distance. Another area you were asked to improve at the time of the previous inspection was the quality of information collected following staff recruitment. These records are now thorough, of good quality and well maintained.

You and the careers leader have begun to develop a whole-school approach to careers information advice and guidance, however, this is still in the early stages. Careers guidance and work-related learning is still predominantly focused on Year 11 pupils. Currently, there is a lack of breadth and depth in the key stage 3 careers and guidance programme. It does not fully provide pupils with the confidence to experience different options available to them, and to feel more informed and prepared for their post-16 provision.

Pupils' academic and personal progress is carefully monitored, so all staff know how well each individual pupil is progressing and can plan for the next steps in their learning. Pupils have extra help if required, such as one-to-one work or through purchasing specialist equipment. Although assessment information is used well to promote individual pupils' good progress, leaders do not have a strategic overview. This means leaders and governors have a limited grasp of pupils' progress over time or as groups, such as a key stage or year group. Leaders cannot compare the progress pupils make year on year, nor can they compare groups to national averages.

Pupils arrive at the school with increasingly complex social, emotional and mental health needs. To respond to this, you have invested heavily in training the pastoral team to respond to these complex needs through, for example, one-to-one or small-group work. Improvement in the attendance and progress of those pupils who are persistently absent is an area that still requires attention.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have taken effective action since the last inspection to ensure that safeguarding is a high priority for the whole school. Record-keeping is thorough and follows school policies and national guidelines. Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding policies and procedures are fit for purpose. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Consequently, pupils feel safe and well cared for and parents agree their children are safe in school.

Since the last inspection, a newly appointed governor has taken on responsibility for safeguarding. She has completed an audit and has regular meetings with school safeguarding leads to ensure that the strong practice is maintained.

The school is successful in helping pupils to understand how to stay safe in a range of circumstances, including online and e-safety. Personal safety is threaded through the curriculum, and topics are covered through small-group assemblies and one-to-one sessions.

Inspection findings

- One of the areas I explored with you was whether pupils are sufficiently challenged within their lessons. Challenge was evident in lessons and across all key stages. Work was closely matched to pupils' ability and teachers were skilled in using topics which kept pupils engaged and motivated. In key stage 2, pupils were excited to read out their poems they had just created from 'wow' words. They were clearly proud of their achievements and showed confidence in reading out loud. Scrutiny of pupils' books confirmed that they are challenged in their learning and make at least good progress. Progress is especially strong in key stages 2 and 3, where pupils completed good-quality extended pieces of writing across a range of subjects.
- Another area I explored with you was attendance and persistent absence. The procedures for securing good attendance are robust and the outreach team has worked successfully to improve this aim. However, persistent absence for a few pupils remains an issue. You have already identified that further strengthening this team and working even more closely with families is likely to have a greater impact in supporting these pupils to attend school more frequently.
- You have been very successful in reducing the number of fixed-term exclusions. They have reduced substantially this academic year because leaders have been proactive in working with pupils and families to manage behaviour. Leaders use a range of strategies to support pupils and never give up on any pupil. Occasionally, a pupil who struggles to behave appropriately in class has been effectively supported through one-to-one tuition, and successfully completed GCSE courses and pursued a college place.
- I also wanted to know if the school could demonstrate that all groups of pupils were making good progress. Pupils all have a detailed and effective half-termly personal record which shows their academic and personal development. Even though this is detailed for each pupil, it is not yet captured as a whole-school picture. Leaders at all levels are not able to have an oversight of pupils' and groups of pupils' outcomes.
- My final line of enquiry was to look at how leaders work with the local authority to make sure that pupils are well supported through their education and health care plans. I saw the quality of the plans and how leaders are organised and thorough in making sure that everyone, including pupils, are involved in the reviews. You diligently make sure that all parties contribute to the annual review, and successfully support parents, carers and pupils to attend and have their say. This support was appreciated by parents and grandparents, who spoke highly of the support during their child's time at school. One grandparent said, 'Staff have been brilliant and so supportive' and that her grandson is now 'able to make the next steps in life'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- use the school's assessment information more effectively so that they have a strategic overview of pupils' progress and attainment year on year and where appropriate against national benchmarks.
- continue to develop the work of the pastoral team so that they can fully support the range of welfare needs presented by pupils and families, particularly to secure the better attendance of some pupils.
- further improve the provision for careers information, advice and guidance, especially in key stage 3, by offering pupils the experience of a range of options for their next steps to increase their confidence to move on to the next stage in their education, training or employment.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Bather
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection inspectors met with you, senior leaders and middle leaders. A meeting was held with six members of the governing body, including the chair. A telephone interview was conducted with a representative from Warrington local authority. Inspectors met with the safeguarding lead and scrutinised paperwork and safeguarding records, including the single central record. Learning walks were undertaken and pupils' books were scrutinised. There were no responses on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. However, inspectors held telephone conversations with a small number of parents. Inspectors took account of the 13 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and spoke with staff during the day. Inspectors spoke with pupils during lessons and at break and lunchtime. Inspectors observed behaviour in lessons and around the school. Documents were scrutinised, including: information about pupils' achievement; the school's self-evaluation; the school improvement plan; attendance and fixed-term exclusion data and information related to the work of the governing body.