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Mr David Miller
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Miller

Short inspection of Pebble Brook School

Following my visit to the school on 18 September 2018 with Simon Yates, 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 November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have ensured that pupils are central to all decisions about the school. All staff are committed to the school's motto of 'success for everyone' and work tirelessly to build pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence. Staff ensure that pupils have the personal, social and academic skills to have happy and successful futures.

Pupils feel valued at Pebble Brook. They appreciate the level of care from all staff and feel that they are making good progress. Pupils told us that they like the lessons and the many opportunities outside the classroom, especially the vocational and employment learning, which includes structured work experience. Pupils are proud to be part of the school. They say that they are listened to and that their ideas are acted on. They also told us that the calm and respectful behaviour we observed is typical of behaviour across the school.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about their children's progress and development. Often, pupils have had difficult experience of school and education prior to joining Pebble Brook. Parents described the transformation in their lives following admission to the school. One parent commented: 'My child is happy, has made friends and learns; three things that I wasn't sure would ever be possible before starting Pebble Brook.'

You have addressed and successfully achieved the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. You have carefully reviewed the current strengths of the

school and identified clear areas for further development, including ensuring that teaching and learning is consistently strong across the school. Governors recognise the need to increase their level of challenge to senior leaders, including when evaluating the use of additional funding.

Safeguarding is effective.

A strong culture of safeguarding runs throughout the school. Staff are acutely aware of the additional vulnerability of pupils. You have established strong and systematic processes through which staff can record the slightest worry. Staff are trained well and know what to look out for. The case studies that we examined showed that all concerns are taken seriously and that there are regular reviews to establish if further action is needed. If required, action is taken swiftly and with determination. Staff have established strong working links with external agencies and use their expertise well. Staff also work well with parents to help them understand how to keep their children safe.

The school's recruitment processes are undertaken systematically and checks regarding adults' suitability to work with pupils are recorded appropriately. Pupils feel safe and benefit from a well-considered personal and social development (PSD) curriculum. This covers potential risks and teaches pupils to recognise and develop a range of strategies to deal with them. Attendance is in line with the national average for special schools.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection we considered how well governors fulfil their statutory duties and hold leaders to account. We found that governors are dedicated to the school and determined that it should provide the best for its pupils. Governors are, rightly, proud of the journey the school has been on and what it now provides for pupils and their families. They have undertaken a range of training, including that relating to safeguarding. Governors recognise that they now need to increase the level of challenge to leaders. They also need to ensure that they are strategic in addressing each aspect of the school's work.
- We also considered the difference that the pupil premium funding makes to pupils. Leaders use this money to provide extra learning and intervention and to develop pupils' social and personal learning, for example through extra-curricular experiences. Leaders explained how this spending has benefited pupils and the school's own assessments indicate that disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to their peers. However, leaders have not been systematic in their evaluation of the impact of their spending decisions.
- We looked at the curriculum and how effectively it prepares pupils for their next steps. Leaders have carefully planned a curriculum that successfully marries academic learning with personal, social and emotional development. It is broad and balanced and supports pupils to make strong progress. The curriculum includes many personalised opportunities, especially in work-related learning, which help pupils to secure positive destinations. Increasingly, pupils are also

successfully gaining nationally recognised qualifications.

- Leaders aim to provide a personalised learning experience for each pupil based on their individual needs. The overall curriculum experience certainly provides this, particularly in the 16 to 19 provision. Here, leaders work tirelessly to secure individual work placements that can often lead to permanent employment. Annual review documentation indicates that staff know pupils well and adapt individuals' timetables to meet their specific needs. However, this drive for personalisation is not consistent throughout the school. In some lessons, pupils often complete the same tasks without reference to their personal targets or their prior achievements. Leaders acknowledge the need to continue their development of teaching so that all becomes as strong as the best.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- governors increase their strategic challenge to leaders
- leaders use a systematic approach to demonstrate the impact of additional funding on pupils' progress
- teaching and learning continue to develop so that all is as strong as the best.

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

Yours sincerely

Lucy English
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Meetings were held with you, other members of the school leadership team and members of staff. I met with members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. I also had telephone conversations with the head of special education needs from the local authority and three external providers. We met with you to review the school's self-evaluation and development plans, and to jointly plan the key lines of enquiry for this inspection. We visited 16 classes across the school to observe pupils' learning, speak with them and look at their work. Most of these visits were conducted jointly with school leaders.

We spoke with pupils at breaktime and met with a group formally to look at their work with them. Fifty-five responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey were considered. Meetings with parents and carers at the end of the school day and 24 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 16 free-text comments, were considered. We spoke with staff during the day and took account of 38 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire. We looked at a range of

documentation, including information about the work of governors, safeguarding, attendance and behaviour, annual reviews and curriculum and lesson planning.