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2 October 2018

Mr Nigel Shipton
Headteacher
The Bridge School Sedgemoor
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Dear Mr Shipton

Short inspection of The Bridge School Sedgemoor

Following my visit to the school on 20 September 2018 with Paula Marsh, 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. Due to a substantial reduction in funding, you have reviewed the staffing structure, and made many changes. As a result, the school has experienced a turbulent time. Staff morale has been low and last year there were significant staff absences. You have ensured that staff receive support during this challenging period. Despite the additional pressures, staff have continued to provide good quality provision for pupils.

For example, staff are quick to praise pupils' good attitudes. Pupils look forward to receiving phone calls and postcards home celebrating their successes. Pupils appreciate the extra support they receive. They show respect for staff and for one another, in lessons and as they move around the school. Many find that they are now able to achieve well and to form aspirational yet realistic plans for their futures. As one astute pupil explained, 'Staff work with us, not against us. Now I know what I can do.'

Staff are adapting well to the changing roles and responsibilities and staff absences have recently significantly reduced. The school development plan, headed 'back to basics', clearly sets out your vision for creating structures that support the sharing of expertise and resources across the school sites in an efficient way. New leaders have not yet had time to be able to show the impact of their work on improving outcomes for pupils.

The four centres provide secure, welcoming learning places where pupils quickly feel at ease. However, strengths seen in one centre are not consistently seen in others. The new leadership structures are aimed at bringing key aspects of the school's work together so that effective practice can be shared across the different departments. This is in the early stages of development. For example, there are several different approaches to how pupils' individual learning plans are presented. A new 'pupil passport' is being developed but it is not in place yet.

An area for improvement at the previous inspection was to ensure that the management committee is effective in checking the work of the school. The management committee has taken this recommendation very seriously and has appointed additional support to ensure that it works efficiently. The focus for the committee over the past year has been to ensure that the school remains as stable as possible while managing the reduced school budget. The committee has continued to review policies and safeguarding arrangements appropriately.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and staff are vigilant and take safeguarding issues seriously. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. As part of the changes to leadership within the school, there is now a leader with overall responsibility for safeguarding, whose role it is to oversee the designated leads for safeguarding in each centre. Oversight is rigorous. Meticulous checks are made to ensure that all staff have read and understood policies and receive appropriate safeguarding training.

The curriculum includes aspects of keeping safe, including how to keep safe while online. Staff carefully check each individual pupil's attendance and issues to do with attendance are discussed at weekly meetings. The management committee fulfils its duties to check on aspects of safeguarding, including making sure that recruitment processes are secure.

All staff who responded to an online survey agree that pupils are safe while at school.

Inspection findings

- We agreed to look closely at some key lines of enquiry during the inspection. As well as exploring how well the school has responded to the recommendations in the previous report, we also looked at how successful the school is in securing good progress for pupils.
- Staff assess and review the progress for every pupil individually. This is appropriate due to pupils' highly individual circumstances with different experiences and starting points. Key to the school's success is the communication between staff about how each pupil is responding to the learning challenges set.
- Daily briefings and weekly reviews ensure that a close eye is kept on how well pupils engage with their lessons. Expectations for all pupils are consistently high across all centres. Demanding targets ensure that pupils move forward in the key

priorities that are appropriate for them. Pupils sense the high expectations and respond well.

- Pupils' books show a pride in what they do. Work is generally at least at the expected standard for their ages. Staff show a real determination that pupils achieve well and leave to go on to successful placements in education, training or employment. Pupils are offered a range of qualifications, including functional skills and GCSEs. There is also an emphasis on preparing pupils practically for independence in the future. For example, many study food and hygiene. Nearly all pupils rise to the challenges set and most do, indeed, move to successful destinations, including local colleges.
- An area for improvement at the previous inspection was to ensure that pupils are prepared well for their return to mainstream education, particularly to ensure that they can socialise with others. Pupils arrive throughout the school year, often having missed large parts of their education due to exclusion or because of significant medical conditions that reduce their ability to attend school full time.
- High staff-to-pupil ratios help to maintain a calm and personalised approach in each centre. There are pleasant communal spaces, such as the kitchens, where pupils are encouraged to socialise and to develop empathy for others.
- Staff communicate well with schools and other professionals to ensure that pupils settle quickly, their needs are understood, and they start to engage with their learning. Staff are successful in ensuring that whenever possible, pupils return to mainstream settings. For other pupils who have long-term medical needs, staff provide a curriculum designed for each pupil, which is adapted through assessments that are discussed each week. This enables pupils to make good progress from their starting points towards their desired outcomes.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders develop their new roles and responsibilities so that they can demonstrate the impact of their work on improved outcomes for pupils
- staff share good practice and develop effective and consistent systems and processes across departments.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the management committee, 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

Alongside leaders, we looked at learning taking place across the different school sites. We spoke to pupils and scrutinised their work. The 26 responses to a staff survey were considered. There were too few responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, to consider.

There were several meetings with leaders. There was also a meeting with members of the management committee and with a representative from the local authority.

A wide range of school documents, including the school's own evaluation, the school development plan and information about the progress that pupils are making, were looked at. Other documents, including information about safeguarding arrangements, staff recruitment, behaviour and attendance, were also taken into account.