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Mrs Liversage
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Liversage

Short inspection of Amwell View School

Following my visit to the school on 13 September 2018 with Tania Perry, 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 outstanding in September 2014.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education provided by the school since the last inspection.

You and your staff have the very highest aspirations for the children and young people who attend your school. Together with your leadership team, you have continued to develop your outstanding practice. You have created a culture where both staff and pupils expect to be challenged to do their very best. Pupils flourish within a culture of mutual trust and respect.

From the moment that pupils enter the school building at the beginning of the day, until the time they leave, it is obvious that they enjoy and make the most of all of the opportunities they are provided with. They like to share their interests, learn and practise using new skills and have fun! Pupils feel safe and secure in the stimulating and safe learning environment that you have created for them. They respond very well to the strategies that staff use to ensure that all pupils experience success.

Results of the school's own parent surveys are very positive. Parents could not be more complimentary about the way that you and your staff go beyond their expectations to ensure that their children are given every opportunity to succeed. They particularly appreciate the efforts that you and your staff make to find solutions to any problems they might have at home. Parents value the frequent

parent group meetings and the regular, high-quality communication between home and school.

Teachers are well supported; they are encouraged to be innovative and to take risks in order to ensure that all pupils' needs are met. Teaching assistants also feel valued and know that you recognise their skills and expertise. You provide them with excellent training opportunities. As a result, many have gained qualified teacher status or National Vocational Qualifications at Level 1, 2 or 3.

Senior leaders' complementary, but contrasting, leadership styles provide high-quality role models for staff. You are committed to ensuring that leadership capacity continues to develop. As a consequence, you have recently expanded your middle leadership team in order to provide greater depth when monitoring, coaching and developing other staff members. However, it is too early to see the impact of these recent changes.

Leaders think strategically and plan highly effectively to meet the needs of complex and challenging pupils. They provide resources of exceptional quality that enable pupils' individual needs to be closely met. An example of this is your 'state-of-the-art' sensory room that provides an environment that is both stimulating and therapeutic for all the pupils who use it.

Since the last inspection, you have revised the curriculum and the range of subjects that pupils follow. In doing so, you have ensured that every activity in which a child participates enables them to meet or exceed their individual goals and aspirations. You have also developed the systems for assessing pupils' progress. Teachers and teaching assistants assess pupils' progress towards meeting their individual objectives in every lesson. They then use this information to plan lessons, experiences, intervention and support that closely meet the pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very successful.

Governance is a key strength. Governors possess the skills, knowledge and understanding to hold leaders to close account. They offer appropriate support and challenge and they have a very accurate understanding of what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve further. They are committed to ensuring that the school continues to provide an outstanding quality of education for its pupils. They continue to play a very significant role in maintaining the school's high standards.

Safeguarding is effective.

Senior leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, including rigorous checks on the suitability of adults to work with children. Records are detailed and of a high quality. The health, safety and well-being of the pupils underpins the work of the school and is given the highest priority. Staff receive regular training and updates in relation to all aspects of safeguarding. They are clear about what procedures they need to follow if they have concerns about a pupil. Detailed pupil files show that leaders respond in a

timely way to any safeguarding concerns, involving other agencies as appropriate.

Staff manage pupils' medical needs excellently. Regular training and meetings are held with parents, accompanied by members of the medical team that support the school and individual pupils. Staff know their pupils and families very well; they are vigilant and sensitive when undertaking this important role.

The well-organised school environment ensures pupils' safety; parents are particularly happy about the recently installed gates at the entrance. There is a nominated safeguarding governor, and safeguarding is a regular agenda item at governors' meetings.

Pupils told us that they feel safe in school. Parents were extremely positive about the measures the school has put in place to address the complex needs of their children.

Inspection findings

- The relationships between staff and pupils are a real strength of the school. The high levels of enthusiasm and commitment exhibited by all staff ensures that every child is challenged, motivated and engaged in their learning. Pupils are encouraged consistently to do their very best. As a result, the progress they make from their starting points is excellent.
- In all areas of the school, staff know their children well and teaching is consistently of a very high quality. Leaders' approaches to assessment and tracking are fully embedded in classroom practice. Teachers, teaching assistants and, where appropriate, pupils are all involved in determining the next steps for learning. Staff focus successfully on helping children make strong progress.
- Routines are very quickly established in the early years. This is evident in the way that children who had only been in school for a week responded to instructions and were engaged in their learning.
- Communication with parents is excellent. Early years, the sixth form and the four key stages are all very well led and managed.
- Pupils in key stage 4 and in the sixth form follow appropriate accredited courses and are very well prepared for the next stage of their lives. Almost all of those who leave the school move on to sustainable education or training.
- Transition arrangements, both into and out of the school, are carefully planned and involve parents and other professionals, if appropriate. All pupils are very well supported to gain essential life skills. Independence is promoted highly successfully. For example, the school charity shop has provided numerous opportunities for the students in the sixth form to apply their numeracy and literacy skills in a meaningful and relevant way.
- Effective action is taken to improve the attendance of pupils. Parents are actively encouraged to bring their child back to school after trips to the dentist or doctor, rather than having the whole day off. Appropriate support is provided for those

who are absent for longer-term medical reasons.

- Behaviour management is a strength of the school. Physical intervention is rarely used as staff are very skilled in using de-escalation techniques. The physical intervention records and behaviour incident logs are detailed. Leaders analyse these closely to inform subsequent practice.
- Staff are highly knowledgeable about different ways of communicating with pupils; this has a significant impact on their progress. Staff model the good use of spoken English and use signing and symbols very well. The extensive use of technology also enhances teaching and learning; it enables pupils to access the curriculum and provides them with additional motivation to achieve well.
- Leaders and governors have very clear strategies for the use of additional funding that the school receives. As a result, sport funding has been used to extend the range of activities that pupils can participate in. Catch-up funding has been used effectively to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The pupil premium funding has helped to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to pupils with similar starting points nationally.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- middle leaders continue to play an increasingly important role in the success of the school and its 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 Hertfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lynda Walker
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors held meetings with you and your leadership team, your school business manager, subject specialists, a local authority representative, two governors and a group of parents. The lead inspector also spoke to your school improvement partner by telephone. Inspectors made visits to 18 lessons with senior leaders and looked at pupils' files and books. They talked to pupils informally about their learning and school experiences. They also scrutinised school documents, including the school's evaluation of its own effectiveness, safeguarding records, policies and procedures, behaviour and attendance records and minutes of governors' meetings. The views of parents from Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the school's own

parent and pupil surveys were reviewed. Responses from the 68 respondents to the online staff survey were also considered.