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Mrs Christine Marshall
Headteacher
Exhall Grange School and Science College
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Dear Mrs Marshall

Short inspection of Exhall Grange School and Science College

Following my visit to the school on 23 October 2018 with Dr Elizabeth Ellis-Martin, 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 May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your school provides an enriching and challenging education for its pupils. The communication, health and physical difficulty needs of pupils attending the school have become more complex in recent years. You have worked hard to alter the curriculum to reflect this so that pupils are prepared well for life after school.

Many pupils join the school having struggled in mainstream primary or secondary education. Your passionate leadership, and the hard work and commitment of your staff, has created an environment that helps pupils overcome challenges and make a success of their education. As their confidence grows, and as they establish strong relationships with staff and each other, pupils learn that their hard work will lead to them achieving ambitious goals. You encourage everyone to 'be the best they can be' and this is reflected in your day-to-day interactions with staff and pupils, and in your wider ambitions for the school.

An enthusiastic, friendly and hardworking ethos pervades your school community. Pupils look forward to coming to school. They speak persuasively, and with pride, about how they are developing personally, socially and academically. Pupils cooperate well and are nearly always kind to each other. They make and keep friends. They are particularly courteous to adults and to visitors. The physical environment is safe, attractive and welcoming.

Parents and carers are very positive about the school. Most parents and carers believe

that the school helps pupils to flourish. A few parents would welcome more frequent, and regular, communication from the school about what their children are learning and how well they are doing.

Senior leaders know the areas where the school is most effective and what they need to do to make it better still. They have dealt successfully with those aspects identified at the last inspection as needing improvement. Teachers now encourage a high standard of handwriting and pupils have ample opportunities to improve their work.

More broadly, the school does recognise the need to sharpen some elements of teaching so that more of it is outstanding. Much is already highly effective. However, the best practice is not always shared widely enough. In a few instances, teachers and other staff do not think deeply enough about how to approach each lesson so that the most is made of their own skills, the pupils' prior knowledge, and the links that exist between different subjects.

Governance is impressive. The governing body is experienced and has a broad range of skills. It understands the importance of checking the accuracy of information it receives about the performance of the school and the pupils' learning. The governors have agreed a strategic direction for the school, with the support of the headteacher, and are committed to developing to meet the needs of pupils in the local and wider area, including by expanding post-16 provision.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders work hard to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Safeguarding is a key priority for the school. All arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and are of a high quality, including for pupils who undertake off-site work experience. Staff in the school are trained regularly in safeguarding. They are quick to learn from experience and their practice is continually evolving to reflect local and national circumstances. Staff know how to respond to any concerns that may arise. Liaison with other agencies, such as children's social services, is frequent, and senior leaders follow through concerns and referrals.

Pupils can recognise the situations that may make them vulnerable. They know who to talk to if they encounter any difficulties. Pupils are taught how to protect themselves from harm inside and outside of school, including when using the internet or social media applications. Pupils are often actively supportive of each other. Bullying or other unkind behaviour is rare.

Inspection findings

- Alongside safeguarding and actions taken since the last inspection, we looked at whether pupils do enough challenging work so that they achieve good outcomes and are successful when they leave school. We also looked at rates of attendance, which have varied a little in recent years.
- Pupils do not usually begin their education at the school. Moreover, they have a wide and growing range of special educational needs. Many more pupils are joining the

school with complex social and communication difficulties, including autism. Pupils usually arrive at the school at different times of the school year having experienced serious difficulties at their previous school. Most have very low or uneven levels of prior attainment. However, once they start at the school they do well. They usually remain at the school until they have completed their education or are ready to move into a local mainstream college or sixth form.

- A detailed programme of assessment and well-planned personal support, including a trial period where needed, gets pupils off to a good start. As pupils develop in confidence, they are encouraged to achieve challenging academic and personal objectives. Information about the pupils' progress, and whether they are acquiring the expected knowledge, skills and understanding, is gathered routinely. This is used to adjust work so that any changing needs are met. All pupils have access to an impressive extracurricular programme, which includes the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.
- Pupils achieve well at the school. Wherever possible, they study the subjects of the national curriculum and are entered for tests and public examinations. Their results show that they do well given their different starting points. Each year, some Year 11 pupils achieve GCSE or other Level 2 qualifications. Most of these pupils go onto study for further Level 2 or Level 3 qualifications at a local mainstream college or sixth form, including A levels. In recent years, ex-pupils have gone onto university, including Oxford, and a few are now studying for postgraduate degrees.
- Not all pupils have the aptitude for this kind of study. Instead, these pupils follow personal programmes of study, which lead to internal and external accreditation and entry level qualifications. Most of these pupils transfer into the Exhall Grange sixth form, which gives them suitable and wide-ranging opportunities to develop the skills they need for work and life. Those in the sixth form participate in core lessons, follow a programme that fosters 'enterprise, enrichment and employability', and undertake very well-organised and productive work placements, or 'internships', in either the school itself or in local but large and well-known businesses.
- Attendance levels are improving slightly. They are good overall. Pupils enjoy coming to school and it is usually only transport difficulties or serious illness that prevents them from attending. Leaders have developed strong procedures for encouraging and monitoring attendance.
- A small number of pupils have complex medical histories, including a few with life-limiting conditions, and this affects their ability to attend school. School leaders and staff work closely with healthcare and other relevant professionals to support these pupils so that they benefit fully from their time at school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- The most effective teaching practice is shared more widely, including by helping teachers and other staff to plan lessons carefully so they make the most of their skills, their knowledge of what pupils already know, and the links that exist between different subjects.

- Parents and carers receive more frequent information about what their children are learning in school and how well they are doing.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Cladingbowl
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection we visited lessons and observed conduct around the school, including during breaktime and lunchtime. We spent time in classrooms looking at the quality and difficulty of the work set. We spoke with pupils and sixth-form students about their experiences at the school. We met with senior leaders and other staff, including non-teaching staff, and spoke with representatives of the local governing body and a local authority officer. We visited the school café and a nearby business, which offer work experience. We reviewed the supervision and welfare arrangements for all off-site activity.

We scrutinised a wide range of documents, including key information about safeguarding, assessment, destinations, the subjects studied in the different years, achievement and attendance. We discussed the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans. We took account of 19 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including 14 written comments. We also noted the views of parents gathered recently by the school.