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27 November 2018

Mrs Judith Salter
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Salter

Short inspection of Glenwood School

Following my visit to the school on 6 November 2018 with Vicky Parsey, 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 November 2014.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have worked hard to ensure that leaders and staff have focused their work on improving the outcomes for pupils. This has been done in the context of a substantial increase in pupil and staff numbers following the completion of the school's new building. You are tireless in your resolve to ensure that every Glenwood pupil has the skills needed for the next stage of their education.

Pupils are engaged and enthusiastic about all aspects of their learning. They are proud of their achievements and are keen to share them. Leaders are candid about the challenges that pupils and their families face. You ensure that they develop the ability to manage these challenges, and this is at the heart of the school's work. You and your leadership team have maintained a culture of high standards.

Under your leadership, pupils learn the skills they need to cooperate and build positive relationships with each other, staff and visitors. Parents are highly appreciative of the school's work. One parent wrote, 'My child is valued. My child loves attending this school and smiles when he sees his teachers. Since being at this school, he has come on in leaps and bounds.'

Learning is well matched to pupils' specific needs and interests. Teaching staff are supported to be innovative to ensure that each pupil's needs are met. Lessons are

engaging for every individual, creating a dynamic learning environment. The deep thought and planning that inform the curriculum followed by each pupil are evident. Leaders are very knowledgeable about what is being done to overcome or limit any barriers to learning.

You have increased the depth and accuracy of information available to leaders through a range of new systems to check on the quality and effectiveness of the school's work. This, alongside the growth of the school, has involved an expansion of the leadership team. Middle leaders have taken on new responsibilities, and staff appreciate the training that leaders provide for them. Leaders are aware of the passion and drive their staff have for the best outcomes for every pupil. We agreed that leaders need to be mindful that staff have a suitable work–life balance, given the plan to expand the school so that it offers pupils residential provision.

Your governors recognise the value of your work. They support you effectively and hold you to account through their half-termly governing body meetings. Governors have a clear view of the school, based on accurate reports and what they learn from their regular visits. They are proactive in talking to staff and gain their views on how the school is performing.

Safeguarding is effective.

Your leadership team and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of a high quality. Leaders keep all staff up to date about safeguarding matters through a regular programme of training, updates and reminders. Safeguarding is viewed, rightly, as everybody's responsibility.

Staff understand what to do if they have concerns that a pupil is at risk. You work well with external agencies and are unafraid to challenge decisions if they are not in the best interests of an individual pupil. Parents and pupils are confident in the school's safeguarding arrangements. Pupils say that they feel safe and know how to seek help from staff when needed.

Inspection findings

- Staff assess pupils in detail on entry to gain an understanding of their abilities and interests. They work with parents and carers and pupils to discuss appropriate targets before pupils start at the school. As a result, aspirational targets are set that are based on a secure knowledge of each pupil.
- Despite the difficult history many pupils have had before joining the school, including exclusion for prolonged periods, all pupils are quickly able to access full-time education. Attendance is above the national average for this type of special school and is monitored and addressed in detail.
- You have managed to unify the school's approach to assessment and have created a bespoke system in school to do this. You use this information to plan accurately for the needs of your pupils. All staff can see the value of this work

and return to the long-term aspirations to re-focus the pupils' curriculum as they progress through the school.

- Pupils work towards appropriate and well-thought-through half-termly targets. These link to all aspects of the pupils' day. Staff make the most of every potential learning opportunity. This can be seen in the careful planning and targeting of pupils' 'next steps' during lessons and playground sessions and at points of transition.
- Staff benefit from ongoing professional support. In one example of their training, staff have developed their understanding of 'difficult' as opposed to 'dangerous' behaviour, and how adults' demeanour can affect pupils' ability to regulate their emotions. Leaders are rightfully proud of the fact that there is little requirement to use physical intervention or exclusion.
- The school's vibrant learning environment supports the delivery of the curriculum. The extensive resources include specialist therapy rooms, a host of sensory environments, and extensive and varied outdoor areas. Staff use their expertise and knowledge of individuals to ensure that the learning environment meets different pupils' needs.
- Leaders have a clear understanding of the skills pupils need to develop so that they can be successful in the next stage of their education. Teachers show pupils how to make the most of their learning and achieve their goals. All pupils make strong progress and those who are disadvantaged, such as those in receipt of pupil premium funding, make the same strong progress as other pupils.
- Leaders make sure that transition arrangements for each pupil are appropriate to their needs. Students and their families make accurate and informed decisions about their choices. All students are well supported when they move on to education or training placements. You shared with me your plans to improve the education, health and care plan process so that all multi-agency partners beyond education are fully represented in the process.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- ensure that the work-life balance for staff is appropriate.

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

Yours sincerely

Fyfe Johnston
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

We held meetings with you, senior and middle leaders and a group of staff. We also met with a group of governors and a school effectiveness partner from the local authority. We observed pupils learning in different lessons throughout the school. This was done jointly with you or other senior leaders. We looked at pupils' work in lessons and we observed their behaviour during lessons and around the school. We spoke with pupils informally and met with a representative group of pupils. We reviewed a wide range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding, behaviour, administration and your monitoring of teaching and learning. We looked at the school's self-evaluation and development plans. We also considered 41 responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the free-text comments. Inspectors also took into account 99 staff responses from those who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire.