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18 December 2018

Miss Elizabeth Nolan
Headteacher
Haymerle School
Haymerle Road
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Dear Miss Nolan

Short inspection of Haymerle School

Following my visit to the school on 4 December 2018 with Shaun Dodds, 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 March 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You and your team show a real commitment to working with the very vulnerable pupils in your care. The school caters for pupils who have a diagnosis of autism with complex needs and most pupils are non-verbal.

On the day of the inspection, pupils were calm and well behaved as they arrived at school, ensuring a smooth start to the day. Pupils appeared happy, and attendance information shows nearly all pupils attend school regularly. At breaktimes, inspectors saw pupils enjoying a range of activities in the playground. They were well supported and supervised by the staff on duty.

Parents who spoke to inspectors said that you and your staff provide a nurturing environment for their children. They were very appreciative of the training sessions that you run to help them manage their children's needs at home and described the support that you give to them as 'amazing'. Parents said that you and your staff keep them well informed of their children's progress.

Staff spoke positively about the recent changes made to the curriculum and about the new assessment system. They feel that leaders have committed to a range of new initiatives to improve the school. Staff told inspectors that they thought more could be done to improve the consistency of how behaviour is managed across the school. Some thought that more ability-grouped classes would enable teachers to

concentrate on learning in lessons rather than managing behaviour. They also said that more could be done to share expertise and specialist knowledge within the school. Inspection findings supported staff's views.

While your senior leadership team has been in post for many years, you were open and honest throughout the inspection about the difficulties you have faced recruiting and retaining staff, particularly at middle leadership level. You have given existing staff the opportunity to attend leadership courses and created senior teaching assistant posts to try and tackle this issue. Nevertheless, this situation has meant that there has not been as much progress with the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection as there should have been. You and your senior team are aware that there are areas of the school's work that need to improve.

Members of the governing body are experienced and understand the needs of the school well. They have a very clear understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities and roles. Governors are fully involved in the life of the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

All staff receive relevant and regularly updated training. As a result, pupils are safe in the school. Staff that we spoke to have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in keeping your very vulnerable children safe. There are clear procedures to follow if staff have a concern about a pupil. Records are well kept and cases tracked using an online system.

On the day of the inspection, parents told inspectors that their children are well looked after and kept safe. While most pupils are non-verbal, two pupils, supported by a teaching assistant, were able to communicate that they felt safe at school and that any concerns would be dealt with by staff. The pupils displayed positive attitudes both to one another and the member of staff supporting them.

Leaders have ensured that all the required pre-employment checks on staff are completed. Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed on some key lines of enquiry. First, we agreed to look at what leaders have done to improve the quality of teaching since the last inspection. To explore this, inspectors visited classes across the school accompanied by senior leaders and looked at pupils' records.
- Pupils generally appeared to be engaged in their learning. Across the school, there were some examples of strong teacher subject and specialist knowledge. We saw pupils being well supported to develop their communication skills. There was a structured approach to teaching and learning, and effective use was made of visual resources. Pupils were well supported by adults in classrooms when moving from one activity to another.
- Each classroom had pupils' targets clearly displayed so that all adults knew what the pupils were working towards. Where tasks were well matched to pupils'

learning needs, the best use was made of learning time and pupils made the strongest progress. However, targets were not always matched well to pupils' abilities. In some cases, targets were not challenging enough for the pupils. Consequently, some pupils finished set tasks quickly and spent a disproportionate amount of time on their reward activity. On occasion, activities were set that were too difficult for pupils to complete.

- Next, we decided to focus on what had been done since the last inspection to improve the capacity of leaders to check and improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. As previously noted, you have experienced difficulties recruiting and retaining staff. You have recently introduced a new assessment system and recognise that effective middle leaders are necessary to ensure its successful implementation. In particular, teachers need to set individual targets based on accurate assessment information. You understand that the target-setting process must be regularly checked to ensure that the pupils make the best possible progress.
- Lastly, we agreed to look at how well the curriculum meets the needs of the pupils. You have recently introduced a new curriculum. Staff told inspectors that the previous curriculum did not meet the needs of the pupils, but they were confident that the new curriculum would do so. There are some signs that it is having a positive effect on both learning and behaviour; however, it is still at the early stages of implementation.
- Pupils benefit from the school's extended curriculum through music, animal therapy, music therapy, yoga, hydrotherapy, and community learning. During the inspection, pupils were seen enjoying creative activities such as participating in a treasure hunt and taking turns to perform 'jingle bells' on their instruments.
- During the inspection, it became apparent that pupils' behaviour was variable across classes and sometimes not well managed. Strategies for managing behaviour were not consistently applied. In addition, information collected about pupils' behaviour is not currently analysed so that it can be used in planning to support pupils' progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the new curriculum is fully implemented and embedded, and meets the needs of the pupils
- the new assessment system is fully implemented and embedded, ensuring that pupils' targets are accurate and meet their learning needs
- behaviour is managed consistently well and that information collected about behaviour is used effectively to promote pupils' full engagement in learning so that they can make the best possible progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Joanna Tarrant
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspection team met with you, your deputy and assistant headteachers, middle leaders, teachers and teaching assistants. We met with the school office manager to review the school's single central record of staff suitability checks. We also met with the chair and vice-chair of governors, the school improvement adviser and a group of parents. Inspectors visited classes across the school accompanied by you and the deputy headteacher to gather a range of evidence related to teaching, learning and assessment. Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, school development plan, assessment and progress records. Inspectors took account of the four responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. There were no responses to the pupil or staff questionnaires.