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Mr Simon Wall  
Headteacher  
Lexden Springs School  
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Dear Mr Wall

### **Short inspection of Lexden Springs School**

Following my visit to the school on 15 January 2019 with Fyfe Johnston, 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 April 2015.

### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection will be a section 5 inspection.

You lead your team with enthusiasm and provide decisive leadership. Together with your skilled leadership team, you have continued to improve provision for pupils at Lexden Springs. The high standards you expect result in pupils achieving beyond their expected targets. This is because staff know the pupils and their needs extremely well. They use this knowledge to plan learning activities that are very well matched to meet each individual's academic and personal needs.

The school provides a calm, caring learning environment. Relationships between adults and pupils are very positive. Pupils are welcomed into school each morning by staff with a smile and positive comment. Parents and carers describe the school as 'an amazing school' and 'a fantastic school, well led and managed by a caring team of staff'.

Classrooms are well resourced and have a positive learning atmosphere. Teachers provide learning activities that are linked to pupils' interests as well as their needs. Learning provides the opportunities for pupils to learn about their local community

and, where possible, develop independence. Bright informative displays around the school showcase pupils participating in a range of learning activities and high-quality work.

Pupils' behaviour around the school at break and lunchtime is exemplary. This is because of the high level of engagement between pupils and adults, who have good behaviour management skills. Pupils in the playground are relaxed and have fun on the play equipment.

The school is currently preparing to move into a new building in autumn term 2019. Leaders are aware of the possible impact this could have on pupils who require familiar surroundings and routines. As a result, senior leaders are implementing a carefully planned transition programme.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school has a very strong culture of safeguarding. Senior leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibility to keep pupils safe. As staff know the pupils well, they are quick to identify any changes that may suggest a pupil is at risk.

Leaders ensure that all the relevant pre-employment checks are carried out before staff are able to work with pupils. Staff receive regular training in the latest guidance and are updated on changes as they occur. Every step is taken to ensure that pupils' personal dignity is maintained when personal care activities are carried out.

Pupils are taught how to keep safe in school, in the community and in a home situation. This is particularly evident in the sixth form, where students are taught food hygiene and the safe use of equipment, safety in the workplace and how to keep safe when taking part in outdoor pursuits.

Strong working relationships exist between school staff and external agencies. Staff are tenacious in ensuring that pupils' needs are met. Parents agree that the school is safe, and the views of several can be summed up by the following parental comment, 'Staff go above and beyond to support both parent and child.'

### **Inspection findings**

- At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to further improve the quality of teaching to raise pupils' rates of progress and achievement. Leaders have ensured that good classroom practice is shared across the school. Staff also receive high-quality training. Staff told inspectors that they appreciate and value this training.
- Assessment is used highly effectively to support learning. Teachers accurately record what pupils know and can do in order to plan further learning activities. As a result, pupils are making accelerated progress.

- The school was also asked to develop the skills and expertise of the middle leaders at the previous inspection. Senior leaders have been highly effective in developing middle leaders. Those who spoke to inspectors were able to provide many examples of the impact of their work on improving provision for pupils. This includes improving attendance, behaviour and parental engagement.
- Middle leaders also play an active role in supporting other schools and the local teacher training alliance. They deliver training in mainstream schools on supporting pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This is valued by local schools.
- The school continues to provide pupils with a rich curriculum that delivers the national curriculum and meets the pupils' education, health and care plan targets. Through interesting topics, pupils develop communication, social skills and understanding of the community, and are provided with opportunities for creative development, exploration, discovery and physical and self-development. Trips and visits are an integral part of pupils' learning, and they often make visits such as to local parks, garden centres and cafés.
- The sixth-form curriculum is highly effective in preparing pupils for independent living. Students have the opportunity to take part in a range of work experiences. Students who are going on to further education or training are well supported during transition. One parent, commenting on their child's transition programme, stated, 'I could not do this without the amazing team at the school.'
- Pupils receive high-quality careers education from professionals who are aware of each individual's needs. Expectations are high, and pupils are supported well in writing their curriculum vitae and applying for employment and training. All pupils leaving the sixth form go on to a relevant programme, college or training.
- Pupils are very well supported in learning how to manage their behaviour. Leaders have introduced a therapeutic approach to managing behaviour. As a result, the number of incidents of disruptive behaviour have reduced. This is because staff intervene, using a supportive strategy, before the pupil can become frustrated. However, there are a small minority of staff who are not fully supportive of this approach to behaviour management as they are yet to be convinced of its effectiveness.
- The governors possess a varied range of appropriate skills that enable them to fulfil their roles to a very high standard. They have a detailed understanding of the strengths of the school and areas that need further improvement. They are very effective in holding leaders to account for the quality of provision. Governors provide a good balance of challenge and support.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all staff understand the benefits of the school's therapeutic behaviour management and are trained to apply it consistently.

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

Caroline Pardy  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors held discussions with you, your senior team and middle leaders. Inspectors also spoke informally with other members of staff. We met with five governors and I had a discussion with a representative from the local authority. Along with senior staff, inspectors visited all classrooms to observe learning and behaviour. Inspectors observed pupils arriving at and leaving the school and at break and lunchtime. I visited Maple Lodge to look at sixth-form provision.

Inspectors looked at the school's improvement planning and the school's self-evaluation summary. An inspector scrutinised safeguarding records and looked at evidence of how well the school manages any concerns about bullying and pupils' welfare and safety. Inspectors considered 51 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 24 free-text responses. We considered the responses of 86 members of staff to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.