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Dr Neil Barrett  
Executive Principal  
Bridge Academy  
Jonathans  
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Milton Keynes  
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Dear Dr Barrett

### **Short inspection of Bridge Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 7 February 2019 with Caroline Oliver, 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 Bridge Academy was judged to be good in July 2015.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You lead the school with a determination to ensure that all pupils engage in learning and make good progress from their starting points. You are supported ably by your senior leadership team, whose members share both your vision and care for the pupils. Teachers and support staff hold the same high expectations that all pupils should achieve their best. The very large majority of staff who responded to Ofsted's survey said that they are proud to be a member of staff and enjoy their work. As a result of your firm commitment and strong leadership, pupils are supported well and thrive at Bridge Academy.

Pupils are positive about coming to school. They say that staff support them well by setting work that is tailored to their particular needs. One pupil remarked: 'I feel happier at this school than I did before. The teachers know what to do before things go wrong.' Pupils settle quickly in the school and participate actively in lessons. They usually behave appropriately and respect the rules and routines. On the few occasions that their behaviour slips, staff manage this effectively in line with the school's behaviour policy. Parents and carers are broadly supportive of the school, with one parent saying: 'This school has saved my child's life. Before coming here, they didn't want to leave the house, but now they enjoy coming to school.'

Leaders and governors have addressed the areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection successfully. All teachers now use the school's system for planning and tracking. The use of this system by leaders and staff effectively supports their much improved understanding of the progress of current pupils. Staff

are beginning to share good practice regularly. Pupils are being supported to attend better, with many now attending more than they did at their previous schools. However, leaders are acutely aware that more needs to be done so that all pupils attend regularly.

Across all sites, most pupils are achieving well through the broad and balanced curriculum. Teaching is typically effective and lessons are planned to ensure that pupils can access learning at an appropriate level for them. However, occasionally, learning is not as strong in some classes as it is in others.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The single central record details the robust employment and background checks that leaders carry out on staff and other adults before they work in the school. Adults are trained appropriately in all areas of safeguarding and know what actions to take to keep pupils safe from harm.

The designated safeguarding lead works well with other agencies to make sure that pupils are safe. Staff maintain effective relationships with a range of other professionals to support highly vulnerable pupils.

You and your staff show an extremely strong commitment to pupils' well-being. Pupils say that they feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe. They know whom to speak to if they have a concern.

### **Inspection findings**

- During the inspection, we looked at leaders' actions to ensure that all aspects of safeguarding are effective, including pupils' attendance. We also considered how effectively leaders monitor and evaluate learning to ensure that all groups of pupils make strong progress from their starting points. We evaluated how well the governing body holds leaders to account for the current success of the school.
- Leaders' effective action has led to some improvements in attendance. Key staff challenge absence, and the school's expectations are rising. Effective monitoring routines are in place, including a high rate of contact with parents. On the occasions that pupils do not attend school, staff work quickly to find out why and establish where pupils are. Pupils are beginning to respond to this high level of care and some are attending more regularly than previously. However, you acknowledge that there is more work to be done so that attendance rates continue to improve.
- An effective system for monitoring pupils' progress is now in place. This is apparent in all lessons, with most staff using it comfortably. The curriculum offers staff the flexibility to accommodate a wide range of pupils' needs. There is a powerful focus within the curriculum on building pupils' confidence and self-esteem. However, there are still areas where an academic focus needs to be

adopted to maximise the progress for all groups of pupils.

- Pupils behave well in class and around the school. This is because staff are successful in promoting a calm and positive atmosphere. Pupils are encouraged to make 'the right choices', and when they fail to do so, appropriate consequences are clearly and consistently applied.
- Leaders work with determination so that, when possible, pupils return to mainstream education, or specialist providers, swiftly. Leaders assess pupils' needs carefully and ensure that suitable actions are taken to provide an appropriate full-time educational placement. As a result, the school makes sure that pupils' long-term needs are met well.
- You have a passionate and committed governing body. Governors bring a range of skills to the strategic leadership of the school. Their wider knowledge and expertise have enabled you to improve accountability at all levels. This has resulted in standards being driven upwards. Despite this, you have correctly recognised that the recruitment of additional governors from outside education will help meet the increasing demands on those already in place.
- Members of the governing body are rigorous in their pursuit of high standards. They challenge leaders during scheduled meetings and visit the school regularly to check the validity of leaders' reports. Like senior leaders, governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They appreciate the work of staff and are keen to support you with the school's next steps.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they continue to:

- improve pupils' attendance
- develop the skills and expertise of all staff through the sharing of good practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Gary Tostevin  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

We observed teaching and learning and scrutinised samples of pupils' work in all key stages. All observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. We held meetings with you, senior leaders, teachers and support staff, as well as with the chair of the governing body and two governors. A meeting with several key stakeholders, including a member of the local authority, was also held.

We scrutinised a range of documents, including: leaders' evaluations of the school's performance; minutes of the governing body's meetings; policies; safeguarding records; records of pupils' attendance and behaviour; and information about pupils' progress. We also scrutinised the school's website. We spoke to pupils during the day. We considered 67 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff, and four responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including four free-text comments.