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Mrs Pam Clulow
Headteacher
Cedars – Newcastle, Moorlands and Darwin Bases
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Dear Mrs Clulow

Short inspection of Cedars – Newcastle, Moorlands and Darwin Bases

Following my visit to the school on 12 February 2019 with Sarah Ashley, 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 November 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment in January 2015, you have built on the strengths identified in the previous inspection report and have taken further action to make improvements.

Supported by a highly effective leadership team, a strong management committee and an experienced and cohesive body of staff, you have created an ambitious and caring culture throughout the school. Staff on both sites prioritise meeting the needs of all pupils.

Staff are proud to work at the school and they all believe that the provision is very well led and managed. Although, they value the training that they receive, staff have few opportunities to observe the most effective teaching in the school and they rarely see outstanding practice elsewhere. Leaders acknowledge that providing more opportunities for staff to learn from the best would help to improve teaching further.

There is some very high-quality teaching in the school and all staff are keen to continue to develop their practice. Teaching is improving, and leaders have acted to address the area for improvement linked to teaching from the previous inspection report. All staff follow the school's marking policy, but they do not

regularly give pupils time to reflect on the comments that staff make about pupils' work.

Leaders have developed a better system for analysing information about all aspects of the school's provision. For example, they carefully consider information about pupils' progress and behaviour to evaluate different aspects of the service. This has helped leaders to have a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

Attendance has improved since the time of the previous inspection. Leaders work well with other agencies, many pupils and some families to reduce absence. However, not all parents fully support the school's efforts to improve attendance.

Governance is strong. Members of the management committee have an accurate understanding of the qualities of the school, and they use their knowledge, skills and experience to hold leaders to close account. Those responsible for governance have ensured that resources are well managed, that the quality of the website has improved and that safeguarding procedures are robust.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All staff regard keeping pupils safe as their responsibility within a deeply embedded culture of safeguarding.

Staff are well trained and are kept up to date about safeguarding matters. They have a detailed knowledge of safeguarding issues, including those that are pertinent to the local area. Staff know how to recognise the signs that a pupil may be at risk.

Staff work well with parents and outside agencies to help to protect pupils, and pupils are taught to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. For example, pupils learn about personal safety, healthy relationships and how to stay safe online. In lessons, they also consider the dangers of grooming, child sexual exploitation, domestic violence, physical and emotional abuse and drug and alcohol misuse. Pupils are confident that they can share concerns with staff and that they will help them to resolve any problems.

Processes for reporting issues are clear and known by staff. Referrals are timely, and appropriate action is taken if required. Leaders and staff follow up concerns thoroughly.

Record-keeping is systematic, and information is stored securely. Appropriate checks are made on staff and visitors, and the maintenance of the single central record of recruitment meets requirements.

Inspection findings

- Staff help pupils to re-engage with education and develop the characteristics of successful learners. Carefully considered activities to boost pupils' self-confidence, improve their communication skills and develop their independence help to prepare pupils well for their next steps. As a result, an increasing proportion of younger pupils move back into mainstream provision or go to specialist settings.
- Over time, almost all Year 11 pupils have moved onto appropriate and sustained places in further education. As a result of good-quality careers education; impartial information, advice and guidance; opportunities to visit colleges and hear college staff talk in school; effective support and meaningful work-related learning experiences, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.
- Pupils make good progress in many subjects and outcomes have improved since the previous inspection. Last year, pupils achieved a wider range of qualifications, including GCSEs in English, mathematics, science, art, hospitality and catering, and design and technology. All pupils who took examinations achieved at least one qualification and almost all gained accreditation in English and mathematics.
- Pupil premium is used effectively for a range of specific interventions to support individual pupils. For example, it provides resources, enrichment activities, literacy and numeracy interventions and counselling. This has helped to ensure that all groups of pupils in the school have similar outcomes to each other.
- There is a positive climate for learning throughout the school. Staff and pupils enjoy productive relationships and staff use their knowledge of the pupils to regularly plan engaging and relevant activities. Attractive displays celebrate pupils' achievements and are used to aid their learning. Tasks are well resourced, and staff consider pupils' academic, social and emotional needs when planning activities. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported in class.
- Staff have secure subject knowledge and use questions well to deepen pupils' understanding. However, sometimes teaching does not consistently challenge all groups of pupils to fully engage with their learning. When activities keep pupils occupied but do not promote secure learning opportunities, pupils do not make enough progress.
- All staff believe that leaders support them well in managing pupils' behaviour. Staff use a variety of methods to help pupils to improve their conduct and most pupils behave appropriately. Permanent exclusions are very rare, and the use of fixed-term exclusions is declining.
- Most pupils have better attendance at the school than they had in their previous setting. Absence is followed up promptly and good and improved attendance are rewarded. There are detailed strategies in place to address poor attendance, but the impact of different actions is not evaluated closely. Additionally, staff have not fully engaged with some parents to support them in

their attempts to further improve attendance and punctuality.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to work with all groups of parents so that they fully support the school's attempts to further improve pupils' attendance and punctuality
- staff are given more opportunities to learn from the most effective practitioners in the school and in other settings
- staff consistently challenge all groups of pupils to fully engage with their learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Mosley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Meetings were held with you, the deputy headteachers, the assistant headteacher and other staff. I met with two members of the management committee, including the chair, and I had a telephone conversation with a local authority officer.

Short visits were made to a range of lessons on both sites with the deputy headteachers. Inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils formally and informally. Behaviour was observed in lessons and during social time.

I considered 18 responses to the staff questionnaire. There were not enough responses made on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to be analysed. Various school documents were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance. Documents relating to safeguarding were checked and I looked at published information on the school's website.