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22 March 2019

Mrs Sarah Baker  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Baker

### **Short inspection of Stubbin Wood School**

Following my visit to the school on 28 February 2019 with Jo Ward, 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 October 2014.

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 outstanding as a result of this inspection.**

You became the substantive headteacher of the school in September 2017. You and the governors assessed that the school was significantly underperforming and ensured that swift action was taken. You reintroduced systems for managing the staff's performance and put in place quality-assurance processes. This included ensuring that the school had a means of accurate self-evaluation and a plan for improving the school. You ensured that the school had statutory positions filled, including a person responsible for children looked after. You restructured the senior leadership team to make lines of accountability clearer and sharper. Consequently, leaders are now much more focused on raising standards and governors are more effective in holding them to account for this than was previously the case.

You have high aspirations for pupils and the school. You have sought out best practice from a range of sources. You have engaged with the local authority and other advisers to evaluate your actions. You have established rigorous ways of checking the quality of teaching and for identifying improvements made. You have made good use of external advisers to validate your own judgements.

You have revised assessment systems in the school and now set appropriate

targets. You are in the process of establishing an accurate starting point for pupils who do not follow the full curriculum. You have introduced a system for tracking education, health and care plan targets, for checking how well pupils are being prepared for life and how effectively their well-being is promoted. However, the pre-formal curriculum and the tracking system are not fully developed.

You have, rightly, identified a need for teachers to approach assessment in a more rigorous and detailed way. You set the target of 50% of assessments to be accurately moderated in December 2018, rising to 75% in April 2019. These figures are low. Parents and those with responsibility for the school have a better and richer picture of how well pupils are achieving than ever before. However, the amount of potentially inaccurate assessment risks leaders not being able to be precise enough in determining the progress of pupils.

You, leaders and those with responsibility for the school want pupils to demonstrate their learning at the highest accredited levels possible. Consequently, you have re-examined the curriculum for pupils in key stages 4 and 5. Last year, the school piloted a new curriculum for students at post-16. This allowed them to be accredited up to entry level 3 in literacy and numeracy. Students were accredited for their preparation for adulthood through qualifications. This year, you have allowed pupils at key stage 4 pupils to access a provision which complements the development in post-16 education and, for the first time, pupils are accessing some GCSE courses. However, leaders have not had sufficient time to evaluate the full impact of the key stage 4 changes.

At the last inspection, the school was asked to refine subject leaders' skills in leading and managing their subjects across key stages 1 to 4. The impact of this has been inconsistent. You were able to provide evidence that progress has been made in science and English but not in mathematics. While much work has been done in respect of this subject, staff's planning is not as well developed. The mathematics curriculum does not reflect the full demands of the national curriculum and leaders describe this as a work in progress.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and are fit for purpose. Staff members are well informed in this area and are consequently vigilant for the signs of abuse. Concerns are closely monitored and tracked by leaders so that robust action can be taken swiftly. Leaders describe themselves as 'tenacious' in their approach to safeguarding concerns and inspectors agree.

Pupils and parents are happy with the school and pupils feel safe. They recognise that there are trusted adults they can approach if they have concerns. They have a clear expectation that adults will listen to any concerns they may have and respond appropriately.

### **Inspection findings**

- Leaders have worked hard to ensure that staff are clear about how to manage pupils' behaviour. Staff work well with pupils to de-escalate situations. Consequently, the number of physical interventions they have needed to make has reduced.
- Those leaders with responsibility for safeguarding have worked closely with professionals to ensure that the school follows the local authority's best practices and procedures.
- Pupils enjoy school and see it as a safe place. Consequently, attendance is above the national average for special schools.
- Together, leaders and governors have a clear vision and strategy for the school. These have been shared with staff. Leadership is purposeful and directed.
- The leadership team has been restructured. It is now supporting a number of local primary schools. Therefore, more leaders are gaining opportunities to develop their skills and experience.
- Sensory classrooms are used well. Pupils have access to a suitable range of stimuli and benefit from interactions which show them dignity and respect. Pupils' social skills are also developed at lunchtimes where they sit with adults and each other.
- Teachers use classroom resources well to make learning more concrete and meaningful to pupils.
- Children in the Nursery provision benefit from teaching that has clear planning, a personalised approach and the oversight of a key worker. Consequently, children are happy and engaged and make strong progress.
- Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum plans are fully aligned with the expectations of the national curriculum across all subjects.
- The new assessment systems have not been thoroughly monitored for their effectiveness and accuracy, so leaders and governors cannot be sure that the information they are receiving from them is consistently precise, and pupils are making the gains they are capable of.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- subject leaders' plans for the school's formal curriculum in key stages 2 and 3 are fully compliant with the demands of the national curriculum in all areas, as appropriate to the needs of the pupils, particularly in mathematics.
- assessment systems become fully embedded for the pre-formal curriculum, so that leaders are assured that pupils are making as much progress as possible.

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

Yours sincerely

Steven Barnes  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, we met with you, representatives of the governing body, the deputy headteachers and other members of the leadership team. We considered the responses of parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, read all free-text comments and met with a sample of parents in the morning. We visited all areas of learning, including the Nursery, with yourself and members of the leadership team. The team inspector and I examined pupils' work in lessons. We met with the school council. Pupils' behaviour was observed during the day and at lunchtime. We met with those who have responsibility for safeguarding in the school and checked necessary documentation. I talked to representatives from the local authority who have responsibility for safeguarding and the quality assurance of the school. The team inspector and I viewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance and their plans for its further improvement. We considered external advisers' evaluation of the school. We viewed a range of policy documents, including those relating to safeguarding and behaviour.