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Mr Russell Arnold
Headteacher
The Quay School
160 Herbert Avenue
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Dear Mr Arnold

Short inspection of The Quay School

Following my visit to the school on 21 March 2019 with Paul Smith, 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 March 2015.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You and your leadership team ensure that you deliver your school vision of 'turning around lives, creating opportunities, building futures'. You achieve this by starting with pupils' views, their interests and their goals. You match these with flexible and creative approaches to designing the curriculum. Pupils develop and build their skills in ways that they often have not been able to before.

Staff across all school sites use well-understood teaching, learning and assessment systems very effectively. They pinpoint pupils' learning needs and design a curriculum which is then implemented in a flexible way. Each pupil's progress is carefully and frequently checked. There are key points through the year for liaison and discussion between home and school to check that learning reflects pupils' hopes and aspirations.

Your focus on high-quality learning extends to all in the school community. The previous inspection recommended that staff have opportunities to work alongside colleagues in other schools, including mainstream schools. You work closely with a wide range of schools across Poole and beyond to share practice and build expertise.

The local authority supports the view that your partnership working with schools, the professional development of your own staff and your commitment to finding

solutions for pupils, are strengths. All staff who gave a view, strongly agreed that they are proud to work at the school. They all agreed that leaders provide the professional development they need and that they feel trusted to innovate learning in ways that are right for pupils.

Many pupils at the school have found engaging with learning challenging in the past, due to their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or anxieties. Staff work particularly well together to understand challenges to pupils and to support them to develop trust, confidence and self-belief.

You ensure that learning across all sites is planned well to meet age-related expectations and that pupils build their knowledge and skills over time. Learning is relevant and accessible. It challenges pupils to drive ahead with their ambitions.

Whichever pathways pupils are on, you ensure that staff have the highest expectations and challenge pupils to push themselves. If pupils are working in the car maintenance base, for example, they work hard, learning to spell and understand new, technical vocabulary alongside developing mechanical skills. In discussions during personal, social and health education lessons, current themes in the news are carefully explored and discussed. Pupils think hard and contribute sensibly and thoughtfully to the debate.

The trust supports a continual, unwavering focus on providing the very best for pupils. New developments to expand and develop the school are carefully planned to ensure that the quality of pupils' experience at the school is not lessened in any way. Leaders across the school are encouraged and motivated, through high-quality professional development, to contribute and grow their leadership skills.

This focus on high expectations and building success is shared across the school community. All staff who expressed a view, strongly agreed that the school challenges pupils to make at least good progress. Pupils speak proudly of their school and comments such as, 'no one judges you here' and 'everyone is respected for who they are, and who they want to be' were typical. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the support that their children receive. 'The school helps our children to believe in themselves and to move on to successful lives', was typical of comments made.

Safeguarding is effective.

The culture of safeguarding is strong across the school. Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Recruitment processes are secure. Staff have a solid and sound understanding of how to ensure that pupils are safe. They are vigilant in reporting any concerns they may have. Well thought out professional development provides staff with wide-ranging information.

There is no complacency. Leaders make frequent checks to ensure that staff have fully understood the messages given during training events. Governors are closely involved with checking that the school meets its responsibilities for keeping pupils

safe. Whole-school themes each term support pupils to develop strong values, based on respect for themselves and for others. This helps to deepen their understanding about how to keep themselves and others safe.

Inspection findings

- We looked at how effectively leaders work together to ensure that pupils are supported to behave well. As with other aspects of the school, you and your leadership team have a deep and accurate understanding of what you do that works well for pupils. Strong, consistent expectations and systems steeped in patience, compassion and empathy for pupils enable them to thrive.
- Clear approaches support pupils to develop their ability to behave appropriately. Staff adopt positive approaches and manage individual needs very well. For example, Tess, the learning dog, provides calm friendship, which enhances learning for those who can benefit from this.
- Through your encouragement, many staff are involved in research projects, such as developing resilience, to further explore how to provide for pupils' mental health. Other agencies are called on when needed to provide individualised, targeted support. As a result, increasing numbers of pupils develop the skills they need to return to mainstream settings. In addition, exclusions from school are consistently low and there are very few serious behaviour-related incidents. All staff who gave a view said that behaviour is managed well and that they receive good support from leaders.
- We also looked at a recent drive to improve reading as an example of how you, and other leaders, continue to drive forward improvements to the school. As part of this, learning resources and the environment have been improved across the school sites. There are welcoming, comfortable 'book nooks' displaying age-appropriate, high-quality and attractive books, which are successful in drawing pupils in to want to pick up a book and read. High-quality displays of reading material, and pupils' written responses to their reading, help to embed strong, positive messages about how reading can enhance pupils' lives.
- Nothing is taken for granted. Leaders rigorously check how well pupils achieve in developing reading skills from their starting points. Targeted teaching is put in place whenever assessment shows that pupils are not achieving as well as they should be. The school's information shows that because of this focus on reading, increasing numbers of pupils are achieving well in reading.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school maintains the high expectations for pupils and the high-quality education that already exists.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the Delta Education Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the

director of children's services for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tonwen Empson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors visited all the school sites and observed learning in all. Pupils' reports, plans, workbooks and folders were scrutinised. Inspectors had meetings with senior leaders, subject leaders and other staff. Inspectors spoke with pupils to gather their views, both informally during lessons and in a meeting with a small group of pupils.

An inspector spoke on the telephone with a representative from the local authority and had a meeting with the chief executive officer of the trust.

Inspectors met with the chair of the governing body and a group of governors. School documents were considered, including documents relating to pupils' progress, development plans and those to do with behaviour and safeguarding.

Parents' views were gathered through a meeting with parents. Inspectors also considered three letters that were delivered during the inspection and six views that were responses to the online Parent View. The 33 views provided by staff to an online survey were also considered.