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Ms Jill Palmer
Principal
Meadowfield School
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Dear Ms Palmer

Short inspection of Meadowfield School

Following my visit to the school on 26 March 2019 with Anne Allen, 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 November 2014.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Senior leaders and staff share your passion and, together, you are determined to unlock the potential in every pupil. You are relentless in your ambition to ensure that your pupils have the capacity to achieve the best possible outcomes, both at the school and in their future lives.

The school meets the often extremely complex needs of its pupils well. Leaders and staff take the time to ensure that they have a detailed knowledge of each pupil and their individual needs. This enables staff to provide pupils with the right support and learning experiences. Consequently, pupils, including the disadvantaged, make excellent progress from their starting points, in both their academic and personal development. Pupils told inspectors they are very happy at the school and really enjoy their lessons, especially making silent movies in media studies. Members of the cheerleading team told inspectors how incredibly proud they were of their performance to an extremely large audience in London.

Relationships between staff and pupils are exceptionally positive. Leaders have ensured that all staff recognise the links between good behaviour and pupils' well-being. Rigorous procedures for recording and analysing behaviour incidents support and improve pupils' behaviour. Staff know the individual triggers that can affect each pupil. They employ strategies effectively to ensure that any incident is dealt with calmly and swiftly. Consequently, pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary.

To further support pupils' well-being, leaders have introduced a 'value-based' approach to education. Pupils are rewarded with a coloured token if they have displayed one of the school's core values, which are 'happy, proud, welcoming, enthusiastic and safe'. The tokens are collected and, at the end of the week, the house with the most tokens flies its house flag on the school's flag pole. Pupils have responded positively to this initiative and actively try to promote the school's values.

The governing body is highly supportive of the school. The governing body's members have a wide range of skills, enabling them to provide an effective balance of support and challenge to leaders. Governors visit the school regularly. They know the school well and have a clear understanding of pupils' outcomes and the impact of leaders' actions. As a result, the governing body holds leaders to account and sets clear targets for the school's improvement.

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors highlighted the school's many strengths. They also recommended that pupils have consistent opportunities to improve their work when teachers give them feedback. Leaders have responded to this by revising the school's feedback policy with staff. Evidence seen in pupils' books during this inspection shows how pupils respond to feedback, and that this has resulted in pupils' misconceptions being addressed and strong progress being made.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The single central record of recruitment checks on staff meets statutory requirements. Training is thorough and up to date. Staff have a clear understanding of current safeguarding legislation, guidance and their responsibilities. This ensures that staff are proactive in dealing with any concerns. The school has excellent relationships with parents and outside agencies, working cooperatively with them to support pupils. Independent external reviews of safeguarding are used to check that the school's arrangements are robust. As a result, governors are confident that the school is effective and proactive in its work to safeguard pupils.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe when online. This enables them to make positive choices in their use of the internet and social media sites when they are at home. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy coming to the school and know who to speak to if they have any concerns. Parents and carers are extremely supportive of school leaders and staff. All parents who completed the Ofsted online survey Parent View believe that the school keeps pupils safe. One parent said:

'The care and support the school provides is outstanding. There has always been excellent home-school communication. We are all working towards a common goal: the welfare and happiness of our children.'

Inspection findings

- Pupils start at the school at different points in the year, from a whole variety of settings, including mainstream schools and home education. Staff assess pupils comprehensively within the first four weeks of them joining the school. This enables leaders to establish a secure baseline from which future progress can be measured. Leaders ensure that the school's assessment data is robust by moderating with special schools in the Kent Special Educational Needs Trust. Leaders set pupils challenging targets, which are reviewed regularly. Interventions are put in place for pupils not making strong progress. As a result, the vast majority of pupils, including the disadvantaged, make good or outstanding progress from their starting points.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils follow one of three different pathways, depending on their ability and the complexity of their needs. The 'Individual, Meaningful, Profile, Assessment, Curriculum, Target Setting' (IMPACTS) pathway is for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Learning is focused on developing pupils' communication, cognition, use of technology, physical, personal and social skills, as well as their emotional well-being. Staff use their understanding of pupils' education, health and care plans and their multiple and diverse needs to plan a highly personalised curriculum for each pupil. Inspectors saw in the lesson on 'Mary Poppins' how pupils really enjoyed and engaged in the learning activities. Pupils who are more able follow the 'extended IMPACTS' or the 'subject-led' pathways. Where appropriate, and with the agreement of parents, pupils are able to move between pathways. In key stages 4 and 5, pupils follow a wide range of accredited courses at a level suited to their ability. As a result of thoughtfully planned approaches, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make strong progress both academically and in their personal development. Leaders have reviewed the curriculum for key stages 4 and 5 and, although this was very appropriate, they wanted to develop the curriculum to provide even greater opportunities for pupils to acquire the skills and qualifications they need for the future.
- The sixth form provides students with good opportunities to prepare for their next stage of education or training. The curriculum follows different pathways that are dependent on students' abilities and stages of development. The programmes are highly individualised and suited to their needs. As a result, students make excellent progress from their different starting points and gain relevant qualifications. Students benefit from appropriate work-related learning, including both internal and external placements. These opportunities help to provide students with the necessary knowledge and skills to gain successful employment. Excellent careers advice and guidance ensures that the majority of students remain in education, training or employment after they leave the school. In September, the sixth form will be based nearer to the town centre. Leaders and governors are extremely positive about the increased opportunities created by this relocation for students' community links, transport training, work experience and the development of their independence skills.
- Leaders proactively work with parents and outside agencies to ensure that pupils attend the school regularly. The school has clear structures to follow up poor

attendance. These are having a positive impact, and overall attendance is on an upward trajectory.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to develop the curriculum at key stages 4 and 5 to provide pupils with increased opportunities to acquire the skills needed for successful transition.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Conway
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, my colleague and I met with you, the school's leadership team, a group of governors, including the chair of governors, and the local authority's adviser. We visited classes in all key stages to observe pupils learning, talk with pupils about their progress and look at their books. All lesson observations were conducted jointly with members of the leadership team. We spoke to a group of pupils. We looked at 24 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire Parent View, including 17 free-text comments, and reviewed the responses to the Ofsted surveys from three pupils and 62 members of staff. We looked at a range of documentation, including information about: the work of governors; safeguarding; the curriculum; and assessment. We examined the school's analysis of pupils' progress and attainment, leaders' self-evaluation and their plans for improvement.