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Mrs Kaye Palmer-Greene
Executive Headteacher
Bristol Gateway School
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Lawrence Weston
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Dear Mrs Palmer-Greene

Short inspection of Bristol Gateway School

Following my visit to the school on 26 March 2019 with Ofsted Inspector, Jen Edwards, 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 April 2015.

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 good as a result of this inspection.**

There have been a significant number of changes since the previous inspection. Bristol Gateway is now part of the Woodway Federation with Woodstock School, and you have been appointed as executive headteacher of both schools. There have been changes in the structure of the senior leadership team, strengthening the capacity of the school. You and your team are working hard to drive forward the improvements required to ensure that pupils receive a high-quality education. In your evaluation document you have judged accurately the key issues to be tackled: most notably, modifying the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils and improving pupils' attendance.

Leaders are well supported by a strong staff team. Staff describe how they enjoy working at the school. They say that they are proud to be a member of staff and believe that leaders do all they can to ensure that the school has a motivated, respected and effective teaching staff.

The school provides a typically calm and orderly environment. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Pupils trust staff and are keen to do their best for them. Inspectors found pupils to be polite and well mannered, with many showing positive attitudes to their learning. The majority of pupils participate willingly, and with interest, in their lessons and generally behave well. They told

inspectors that they enjoy going to school and describe how 'the list would go on forever' when thinking about what it is they enjoy about Bristol Gateway.

At the time of the previous inspection, you were asked to improve the attendance of pupils. Although you have made some notable improvements for individual pupils, you are aware that there is more work to do. The appointment of a parent support and attendance manager is working well in ensuring that pupils attend school regularly. Working closely with parents provides them with helpful guidance and support to help their child and improve their attendance.

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. These included: how the school ensures that pupils are safe and behave well; how leaders ensure that pupils attend school regularly; the effectiveness of leaders in ensuring that pupils receive a high standard of education; how teaching supports good learning; the effectiveness of the curriculum in supporting pupils' academic, social and emotional development; and how well the school prepares pupils for transition and their future destinations. These key lines of enquiry are considered below under 'Safeguarding' and 'Inspection findings'.

Safeguarding is effective.

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and meet statutory requirements. Leaders, including governors, are well trained in safer recruitment. As a result, all staff are carefully checked prior to starting in post to ensure that they are suitable to work with children.

Staff and governors demonstrate a secure understanding of the need to protect these vulnerable pupils from all possible risks. They keep themselves up to date with current guidance by attending training on safeguarding, including the 'Prevent' duty and child sexual exploitation. This means that staff are able to take the necessary action, with confidence, should they have any concerns about a pupil.

Parents who responded to Parent View commented that their children feel safe in school. However, a small number of parents raised concerns specifically about behaviour and bullying, and do not feel that this is tackled well enough by school leaders. Nonetheless, pupils who spoke with the inspectors, or responded to the pupil survey, described how staff do keep them safe. They were confident that bullying is rare and that, when it does happen, staff act quickly to resolve it.

Inspection findings

- The pupils who attend this school have significant and complex needs which make them highly vulnerable. School staff work extremely hard to help pupils overcome the many challenges they face and form positive relationships with them. As a result, pupils learn to trust adults quickly, which supports them at times of heightened anxiety.
- Pupils generally socialise well at playtimes and lunchtimes. They welcome the

opportunity to select from a range of activities during these times, such as football and IT. The role of pupil ambassadors is proving effective in promoting good behaviour. Pupils contribute to the content of behaviour policies. They have a clear understanding of how they are expected to behave and the negative behaviours that are not tolerated.

- Pupils know the consequences of poor behaviour. While there have been no permanent exclusions in recent years, too often pupils receive a fixed-term exclusion for inappropriate behaviours. Leaders recognise this, and know more work needs to be undertaken to quickly reduce the numbers of fixed-term exclusions.
- Leaders have rightly identified the need to improve pupils' attendance further. Inspection evidence found that work undertaken by leaders, including the newly appointed parent support and attendance manager, has significantly improved the attendance of a number of pupils. Nonetheless, leaders recognise that more can be done to ensure that pupils attend regularly, and attendance compares favourably with the national average for similar schools.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, development plans are not sufficiently robust in determining when and how they will be checked by leaders to ensure that actions are having the desired impact. Subject leaders do not have the opportunity to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning in the subjects they lead. Therefore, they do not know well enough what is working, or not working, and why.
- Governance needs developing. Governors are not holding leaders sufficiently to account for the quality of education they provide for pupils. Governors' minutes show that, while governors ask questions of leaders, they do not probe deeply enough to secure the information they need. The appointment of a new chair of governors has been secured. However, it is too early to determine the impact of their work in driving forward the work of the governing body.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to improve pupils' achievement. There is some strong teaching across the school. Teachers use pupils' education, health and care plans to plan learning carefully that matches pupils' needs. This enables pupils to achieve well. Nonetheless, there remain some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Occasionally, teachers do not insist on the same standard of work from all pupils, or in all classes. For example, teachers do not routinely pick up on errors in pupils' technical skills, such as spelling, grammar and punctuation. Consequently, this hampers the progress that pupils make as they do not learn from their mistakes.
- When planned activities do not meet the needs of pupils, they flounder, become disengaged and do not learn well or become overly reliant on staff to complete tasks for them. Conversely, when teachers plan tasks that precisely meet pupils' needs, pupils work hard to complete the task to a high standard and achieve well. This achievement is particularly evident in the work and learning viewed in key stage 4. As a result, outcomes for pupils at the end of key stage 4 continue to improve year on year.

- Pupils are not always clear about what they need to do to improve their work. However, when they are given high-quality guidance, pupils learn well and make impressive gains in their learning. For example, Year 8 pupils were clear in what they needed to do to improve their writing. As a result of guidance from the teacher, they produced a piece of high-quality writing of which they were extremely proud.
- Leaders offer a broad curriculum and give pupils a range of academic and vocational qualifications to study. However, the current curriculum is not suitable for all pupils as it does not meet their needs well enough. This is especially the case for those who are better suited to following more vocational pathways. Consequently, some pupils do not cope well with the subjects they are studying, and this increases their anxiety. This heightened anxiety is then reflected in their behaviour and attendance which falter. The curriculum for the most able pupils is enabling them to achieve well in their GCSEs, most notably in mathematics, English and ICT.
- The curriculum intention is to prepare pupils well for the next stages of their lives. Leaders demonstrate a determination to create a curriculum that is rich in citizenship, spiritual, moral, cultural and social education, to enable pupils to become independent and prepare them for the adult world. Leaders have put in place a steering group to consider the future of curriculum development. Nonetheless, the implementation and monitoring of the curriculum to determine its impact is not yet securely in place.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue, at pace, to review the intent, implementation and impact of curriculum planning to ensure that pupils have access to a curriculum that precisely meet their needs, and enables them to reach their full potential
- they continue to work closely with external agencies to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions
- there is a continued focus on improving the attendance of pupils
- leaders, including governors, regularly monitor and evaluate the impact of the school's development plans
- subject leaders have increased opportunity to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the subjects they lead
- teaching staff consistently provide pupils with information as to how they can improve their learning, especially in how pupils can improve their spelling, grammar and punctuation
- pupils become less reliant on staff when completing their work
- governors hold leaders to account more effectively to ensure that pupils receive the best education.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools

commissioner and the director of children's services for Bristol. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jen Southall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you and your senior leaders. Together, we talked about the improvements which have been made since the previous inspection. We viewed learning across the school. We also held discussions with the chair of the governing body, middle leaders and staff. Inspectors met with an education adviser from the local authority and a phone call was made with an officer from the local authority with responsibility for safeguarding. Inspectors spoke informally to pupils throughout the inspection.

A wide range of documentation was looked at, including the school's evaluation of its own performance and information relating to pupils' current achievement and progress. Inspectors also checked the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements.

We spoke with parents during the day and took into account the 13 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View. Inspectors also considered additional comments received from parents via the free-text message service. Inspectors considered the 14 responses received to the staff questionnaire and two responses from the pupil survey.