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Mr Jeremy Turner  
Executive Principal  
Bushey Meads School  
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Hertfordshire  
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Dear Mr Turner

### **Short inspection of Bushey Meads School**

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 2019 with Karen Kerridge and James Dyke, Ofsted Inspectors, 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 September 2015.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You have significantly increased the proportion of pupils and students attaining higher grades at GCSE and A level across all subjects. The support you provide for disadvantaged pupils to catch up is thorough, particularly for reading and literacy. Leaders have provided specific training for teachers and taken responsibility for improving pupils' outcomes. A high proportion of staff responded to Ofsted's survey of their views and were exceptionally positive. Staff are very proud and motivated to be part of the school. The vast majority of respondents to the staff survey said that leaders are supportive and respectful in every aspect of leadership, with just one exception to a majority view. Half of respondents agreed that leaders take workload into account when implementing policies and procedures.

The school demonstrates strong practice in several aspects. For example, you have created an exceptionally positive culture around the philosophy of having a 'mind to be kind'. In addition to exceptional subject choice, your enrichment and extra-curricular provision is extensive, including lunchtime quiet spaces, after-school

timetabled activities and revision, subject-related whole-school trips and events in school.

You and other leaders are well supported by governors. They know the school very well because of their involvement in the school's inclusive and thorough self-evaluation procedures. They are very proud of what the school has become. They regularly take part in relevant training as appropriate to their roles and agree actions with their linked school leader. However, the trust has not ensured that governors routinely monitor whether all key training updates, such as safer recruitment, are recorded.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have made it exceptionally clear to parents and carers as to how pupils are kept safe. Your website has a clear section detailing the school's commitment to safe practices, including an online form to report any bullying. Very few parents now disagree that the school deals effectively with bullying in Ofsted's survey on their views.

Leaders ensure that staff are regularly trained and that safeguarding is promoted in assemblies to pupils, encouraging a culture of reporting incidents. Leaders make sure that relevant teachers are aware of pupils' issues via regular safeguarding meetings and personal plans. Leaders contact external agencies when appropriate and maintain pupil records, carefully and securely. Consequently, vulnerable pupils are very well supported.

### **Inspection findings**

- In 2018, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils did not make progress in line with other pupils nationally, except in mathematics, where they made strong progress. We found that recent improvements have been made. Teaching, learning and assessment for the most able pupils, disadvantaged pupils and for pupils with SEND are well planned and delivered. Teachers monitor pupils' performance regularly in lessons and know if they are falling behind. Consequently, overall these pupils are now making at least good progress across the curriculum, with key stage 3 and key stage 5 pupils making strong progress. All pupils say they feel well supported and readily told us a range of examples of the support they value, such as free examination packs, additional trips and small group revision masterclasses.
- There is extensive planning and provision for most-able pupils, such as through trips, videos, revision strategies in key stage 3 and additional subject activities. Teachers identify pupils showing a talent in their subject on an annual basis and use their subject knowledge to plan how to strengthen their progress. These pupils value their experiences and use what they have learned to improve their progress. The most able pupils, including disadvantaged most-able pupils, are making good progress.
- The deputy headteacher works extensively with pastoral leaders and those who lead SEND. Together, they work creatively to remove barriers to learning. In

lessons, we saw that the designated teaching assistants knew their pupils' learning needs well. Pupils' work in books showed similarly good progress to all pupils. Leaders implement and monitor personal plans for all disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. Their actions to improve progress focus sharply on pupils' individual needs.

- All pupils have opportunities to study a very wide range of subjects to meet their needs, such as French or Spanish, law, childcare, food and nutrition, music and drama, sociology, economics and business studies. Pupils with SEND study additional qualifications such as the Arts Award.
- While provision now meets the needs well of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, the level of absence for some of the older pupils within these groups is above the national average. Consequently, their progress is not as strong as it could be.
- Leaders build your 'mind to be kind' culture by prominently displaying signs, weekly emails, daily character-development sessions, pictures and promoting random acts of kindness. The phrase was used repeatedly by the whole-school community of staff, pupils and parents. Pupils told us that this means they think about why it is good to be kind. This philosophy has built upon your pupil leadership and ambassador roles. Similarly, the rewards system is now very well embedded. The vast majority of parents and pupils would recommend the school to other parents.
- You have further strengthened anti-bullying practices. Pupils told us that bullying is not a problem in the school, but they could report any bullying by pressing the special anti-bullying button on their computer interface. Pupils know that the highly valued pastoral team will react quickly and effectively to deal with any problem. We saw exemplary behaviour in lessons, at breaktime and at lunchtime. The proportion of respondents to the staff, pupil and parent surveys was particularly high and most agreed that good behaviour is a strong feature of the school.
- You have appointed lead practitioners in science, English and humanities, as well as funding a whole-school reading and literacy culture. Leaders understand the practice that leads to the very good progress of pupils in mathematics and have systematically shared this practice with other curriculum areas. Innovative school-wide continuous professional development, such as 'Monday Magic Moments', ensure a constant focus on sharing great teaching practice.
- The science curriculum now provides progression across year groups and teachers plan engaging activities with a focus on scientific principles. Teachers in English use questioning to develop pupils' enthusiasm for the set books and give detailed feedback on how to improve. All pupils have additional time for reading in key stage 3 and literacy in key stage 4 to support all subjects. Leaders have developed a culture of reading in and out of lessons.
- The learning resource centre (LRC) manager is passionate about reading and works with his pupil ambassadors to welcome pupils into the LRC. The centre is an important hub for pupils out of lessons. Book review folders in key stage 3 showed evidence of a wide range of pupils actively engaged in their reading. Pupils told us that they enjoy and benefit from reading.

- Consequently, pupils' progress has improved considerably in English, science and history and is on an upward trajectory in geography.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the attendance of some older disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND improves by evaluating the impact of current actions and making necessary changes
- a review of the procedures for monitoring record-keeping ensures that the records of staff key training updates are accurate.

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

Yours sincerely

Georgina Atkinson  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors visited a range of classes covering all core subjects. We observed pupils at work and scrutinised the work in their books and folders. We spoke with pupils informally in classrooms and when walking around the school site. We also selected and met with a group of eight Year 7 pupils, a group of nine Year 11 pupils and a group of eight sixth formers.

Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during both structured and unstructured times. We reviewed feedback from the 238 parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the 182 free-text responses, the 274 pupil responses and the 129 responses from staff to Ofsted's survey of their views. I held a meeting with four governors and one trustee.