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Mr Simon Yates  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Yates

### **Short inspection of Chailey Heritage School**

Following my visit to the school on 8 May 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 October 2014.

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

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

You lead an inspiring school that consistently develops and implements provision to meet pupils' special educational needs. You are well supported by a strong senior leadership team and staff that are dedicated and skilful. Together, you put into practice every day a passionate belief that all pupils should access rich and meaningful opportunities at school, no matter how complex their learning and health needs.

Parents told inspectors how happy their children are to come to school. They say that children make excellent progress because their needs are so carefully understood. Parents told inspectors that many children would be hospitalised, and unable to attend school at all, without Chailey Heritage's multidisciplinary teaching and clinical expertise. A small number of parents would welcome more effective ways to communicate between home and school. You recognise that there are particular challenges for regular home-school links because most families do not live locally and almost half of your pupils are boarders.

Following the previous inspection, inspectors asked you to develop the roles of middle leaders at the school, so that they further improve the quality of teaching and learning. Your three departmental heads are now fully involved in school development. They lead their teaching teams effectively and know the detail of their

work. They provide guidance and feedback to help them meet each pupil's needs precisely.

As your pupils have increased in numbers and in their complexity of needs, so has your school adapted. As a result, in recent years, you have pioneered a curriculum that is bespoke to your school. It builds around each individual pupil by focusing on seven relevant areas of learning. You, your leaders and teaching staff have ensured that this highly personalised, learner-centred approach is at the heart of the school's provision. One parent summed up this approach telling inspectors that, 'because our children don't fit into a box, the school makes the box for the child'.

Leaders have a detailed knowledge of the school's work. As a team, you systematically challenge yourselves with almost everything that you do by asking 'why'. This question helps you to justify your actions and reflect on their impact. Your responses help to generate new ideas, some of which evolve to become development actions. Current plans include extending learning experiences still further, such as in drama and physical education, by maximising use of a newly built resource centre that is nearing completion. Inspectors agreed with governors that you will need to identify sharply the additional impact on pupils' development and progress.

You and your senior leaders value having a highly trained workforce by supporting staff with opportunities for coaching, further accreditation and research study. A powerful example of your staff's developmental work has been with key stage 4 and post-16 students. Ground-breaking materials have been created that enable them to understand their bodily changes to help prepare them for adulthood. They learn about safe and unsafe touches and the difference between a friend and a friendly person. Many of your pupils are non-verbal, and staff have cleverly ensured that assistive communication strategies support pupils to use correct vocabulary. Sixth-form students know that they have a right to express choices and preferences, for example, to their carers.

Governors are knowledgeable about the school's work as a result of their regular and focused visits to the school. These visits help them to hold leaders to account and report to the foundation's trustees. The governing body maintains a keen interest to understand and challenge leaders as to how the school's provision makes a difference to pupils' outcomes, including for disadvantaged pupils.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

School leaders and all staff are constantly vigilant to keep children and young adults safe from harm. All pupils are supported by social care and clinical professionals and, additionally, around one third are looked after. School staff know pupils intimately and they are quickly alert to even the smallest signs of concern about pupils' care or safety. Working as one of a team, the designated leader ensures that all staff and governors are trained to meet their safeguarding responsibilities and that they are kept up to date, including in relation to the 'Prevent' duty and child sexual exploitation.

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The governors' record of recruitment checks is diligently maintained. Some parents told inspectors that the school is the only place outside of the home where they feel that their children are safe. Timely communication with parents and other professionals ensures that vulnerable families have the support they need for their children to enjoy and achieve well at school. Leaders' open culture of care and concern means that all incidents are followed up thoroughly, however minor they might be, in order to review and sharpen practice. Pupils said that there is no bullying. They get on well together and with the staff who support them.

## **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection, we looked at two specific areas of the school's work. Inspectors' first line of enquiry explored how well teaching, learning and assessment meet pupils' needs. Second, we looked at how effectively leaders ensure that pupils make as much progress as they can.
- Teachers plan and review learning precisely, making constant use of information from all of the adults who work with pupils. Even the smallest facial gesture is a communicated response that staff take into account. The school's finely tuned processes for assessing pupils' capabilities ensure that provision is continuously matched to each individual and that pupils are given a broad range of experiences.
- During our learning walk, we saw how positively pupils engage with planned activities, whether they are learning about time and money, sounding out a musical rhythm or learning to drive their powered wheelchairs. The use of massage and therapy includes opportunities to develop communication and learning, such as counting.
- Annual and mid-term reviews enable everyone, including pupils, to reflect on achievement and to set meaningful new targets which comprise their individualised curriculum plans. Teaching staff make constant reference to these plans, adapting them as targets are met, or when pupils' needs change. Annotated plans are collated in a 'learner profile' that tells the complete story of progression in learning. The profiles show that teachers set high expectations for pupils to achieve. They do so as a result of their own determination and adults' patience.
- Parents appreciate teaching staff's persistence in helping their children make at least good progress. They welcome the way in which the school is prepared to try any strategy or idea that might unlock or enhance their children's development. They typically say that school staff do everything possible to ensure that pupils make at least good progress.
- Following the previous inspection, you established that measures of progress would be specific to each pupil. Teachers take into account what each pupil could previously do and can now do, reviewing in detail, with leaders, what has facilitated or hindered that rate of progress. You are confident that the school's highly responsive approach ensures that each pupil achieves as well as they can.

Your checks are thorough and rigorous.

- Learners' profiles show that pupils make strong progress to develop increasing independence, particularly with mobility and communication. The most able pupils learn useful subject-specific skills that challenge their thinking and result in recorded work, such as poems and stories. By the time students leave the sixth form, they have typically learned to communicate their views and are equipped to make choices about their future.
- Using a range of communication strategies, the most able pupils and students told inspectors that they enjoy their learning, especially in reading and mathematics. They relish the wide range of curricular activities that the school offers, such as aquatics and horse riding. Although many of these opportunities are therapeutic, they also build pupils' confidence, communication and physical skills.
- Disadvantaged pupils are given extra learning experiences in line with their needs. For example, some of them have benefited from having additional access to music while others have enjoyed having their very own reading books. Disadvantaged pupils' progress is closely checked, including by governors, to ensure that additional funding makes a positive difference to pupils' learning.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- opportunities for home-school communication are enhanced
- enrichments to the curriculum arising from the new resource centre further extend pupils' learning and progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda Jacobs  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors met with you, your senior leaders, a group of parents and a group of pupils. We toured the site and visited all classes to observe teaching, learning and pupils' engagement. We spoke to teachers about pupils' achievements. We made checks on the school's safeguarding procedures, including the vetting of staff, record-keeping and staff training, and we observed procedures for meeting pupils' dietary needs at lunchtime. We reviewed a range of documentation, including information about pupils' progress, planning, reviews and a sample of learner

profiles. We scrutinised the school's policies, and checked information about the performance of staff. The lead inspector spoke to three members of the governing body. We considered 94 responses to the online staff survey, which included some written comments about the school. The inspection team also received 36 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, which included 32 written comments.