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Mrs Carla Chandler
Executive Headteacher
The Smart Centre
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Dear Mrs Chandler

Short inspection of The Smart Centre

Following my visit to the school on 11 June 2019 with Sam Nowak, 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 second short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in October 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

Leaders and governors have developed a strong and ambitious vision and ethos for the school, which has the overwhelming support of school staff. Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have clear plans to improve the school further.

Governors are well informed about how well pupils are improving in their academic subjects and their personal development and well-being. Governors are committed to ensuring the highest standards of education.

The school provides education and support for pupils with a very wide range of needs. Staff know pupils' needs very well, and they work hard to support pupils to have a positive experience at school and to leave with the best chance of success in the future.

You have worked very effectively with the head of school and the senior leadership team to ensure that there is a cohesive and well-thought-out approach across all school sites. Pupils' progress at all sites is monitored and tracked in detail, and there is a consistent approach to the way in which the curriculum is delivered. The curriculum is well matched to the needs of the pupils.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is a strength of the school. These aspects are taught through a range of subjects, including citizenship, personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, English and religious studies. Pupils are supported to learn about British values, including tolerance, and to understand the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.

You and your leadership team have addressed the issues identified at the last inspection. Assessment of pupils' achievements is now more refined. The careful induction systems, for example, are used well to make sure that teachers know where pupils are starting from. You have worked effectively to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in all parts of the school. You have rightly identified that this could be improved even more if subject and middle leaders were helped to make a greater impact on pupils' outcomes.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All staff understand their responsibilities to safeguard pupils and the many ways that pupils may be at greater risk of local risk factors, including the influence of gangs and knife crime. Leaders, including governors, have ensured that all requirements for the checks on staff who work at the school are in place and are carefully monitored.

School leaders have ensured that systems are in place to record and monitor safeguarding concerns, including when external agencies are involved. Leaders are quick to follow up concerns and work well with other professionals, including representatives of the local authority, health and police, to ensure that pupils get the support they need.

Pupils feel safe at all sites of the school. They have no concerns about bullying and they feel that behaviour is managed well. They have warm and trusting relationships with the adults who support them and they know whom they can talk to if they have any concerns. Parents agree that their children are safe at school.

Inspection findings

- We agreed to look first at how well leaders manage pupils' behaviour, to ensure that they know what actions will help pupils do their best at school. This is because you and your senior leaders have made this a particular area of focus.
- Leaders have developed systems for recording incidents of poor behaviour across the school over time. This information is used well to inform the work of staff in the school to improve pupils' behaviour. For example, the introduction of a new dress code and behaviour expectations has contributed to the reduction in low-level disruption. Pupils now have fewer interruptions to their lessons and, as a result, are making stronger progress over time.
- Fixed-term exclusions have reduced at the school since the last inspection, and the school has plans to reduce these still further. The school recognises the safeguarding risks for pupils who are not in school and has taken action to

develop alternatives to exclusion.

- The extremely positive relationships between staff and pupils are a strength of the school. Leaders, including governors, are clear about the contribution that it makes to improvements in pupils' behaviour and the gains they make in personal development. Staff surveys and meetings with staff during the inspection indicate high levels of support for the way that leaders set and implement the vision for pupils' behaviour and conduct. Staff are almost unanimous in saying that leaders consider staff well-being and support them well in their work. Staff overwhelmingly believe the school has a culture that encourages calm and orderly conduct and is aspirational for all pupils.
- Pupils feel that behaviour is managed well. They feel that they are treated with respect and that they have a voice in saying how best to support them when they are feeling angry or upset. Many pupils have had a number of very negative experiences of education before being placed at the school and feel that the Smart Centre has offered them a positive experience that they have not had before.
- Leaders and all school staff work tirelessly together to prepare pupils for their next steps. This is often a return to mainstream education. Pupils in Year 11 frequently move on to successful college placements in the local area.
- Next, we wanted to see how well leaders have ensured a curriculum offer that both encourages pupils to attend school and progress well in all areas and prepares them for the next stage of their education.
- The curriculum on offer for pupils at all sites of the school is carefully thought out and implemented well. It has an appropriate mix of academic subjects and opportunities to develop pupils' social and emotional skills that pupils will need to be successful and happy adults.
- Leaders ensure that there is flexibility in the curriculum so that it is tailored to the individual needs of pupils. They ensure that pupils can make links between subjects and use the knowledge they have gained in real-life situations.
- Teachers are effective in making lessons interesting and relevant. For example, in one English lesson the teacher was using contemporary 'rap' lyrics in a lesson on unseen poetry. The ideas being explored included relevant moral, social and cultural themes.
- The curriculum includes specific opportunities to teach pupils how to keep themselves safe online and in the community. It also provides opportunities to build pupil's resilience to the local risk factors, including drug use, sexual exploitation and gangs. The school works well with external agencies to protect pupils from these significant dangers.
- Finally, we wanted to explore the work the school has done to improve pupils' attendance. Attendance is significantly above the local and national averages for this type of specialist setting. Many pupils start school with very low levels of attendance, or may not be attending school at all.
- Very effective systems of induction have been developed by leaders. There is a careful process of understanding what pupils already know and can remember.

As a result, work is generally pitched at the right level from an early stage. The school caters for a very wide range of abilities, including pupils who will gain GCSEs at the highest grades. Teachers and supporting adults have high expectations of what pupils can achieve.

- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well, and make progress over time from their starting points. Their individual needs are very well understood and the school invests in specialist training and support for the adults who support pupils with specific and complex needs. This effective support has improved pupils' outcomes and their attendance.
- Leaders have ensured that there are effective systems in place to respond quickly when a pupil misses a session at school. All staff at school see this as a shared responsibility and work very well together to encourage and reward good attendance.
- The school is a calm and orderly environment, and pupils build positive attachments to school staff. Lessons are interesting and classrooms are pleasant, well-resourced and stimulating places to learn.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the role of middle leaders is further developed so that they have a greater impact on monitoring and improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in their subject areas.

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

Yours sincerely

Gary Pocock
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, your head of school, the senior leadership team and your deputy designated safeguarding lead. We had discussions and meetings with governors, your local authority link advisor and groups of pupils and staff. Inspectors visited classrooms at all sites, accompanied either by you or one of your senior leaders. We talked to a wide range of pupils and staff and, together with leaders, looked at pupils' work and other evidence to evaluate pupils' progress over time. We scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, plans for improvement, safeguarding records and behaviour and attendance information. We considered the many responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's survey for pupils. There were too few responses to Ofsted's survey for parents to be reported, but you provided your own

recent parent survey results, which inspectors considered.