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Mrs Ruth Harding
Headteacher
Oakleigh School and Acorn Assessment Centre
Oakleigh Road North
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Dear Mrs Harding

Short inspection of Oakleigh School and Acorn Assessment Centre

Following my visit to the school on 12 June 2019 with Barney Geen, 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 April 2015.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Both you and your deputy are new to your current positions; however, you are not new to the school. Together you have maintained the high quality of provision at the school.

You are proud of the school's approach to communication and to meeting the needs of each individual pupil. You clearly explained that you have developed a specific approach since the last inspection, which looks to give all pupils a way of communicating. This can be through the use of sign, symbol or language. Pupils are very well supported to use electronic symbol systems and paper-based symbol systems. These are closely matched to individual need. Providing the pupils with a method for communication has contributed to a reduction in behaviour issues in the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders and governors are aware of the vulnerability of the pupils attending the school and promote a culture of safeguarding across the school effectively. Regular training for staff ensures that the well-being and safety of the pupils is paramount. Leaders make sure that all the required checks take place when recruiting staff. Parents say that the school is a place where the pupils feel safe.

A large number of leaders and governors have completed higher-level training courses in safeguarding. Teachers and teaching assistants described in detail the safeguarding training they are provided with and how this enables them to keep the children safe.

Inspection findings

- We agreed to look at the impact middle leaders have on pupils' behaviour and their attitude to learning. This was because the work of middle leaders was an area for improvement identified at the last inspection and a large part of their role is in supporting teachers to be consistent in their approach to behaviour.
- Inspectors spoke to teachers and teaching assistants and they were very positive about the support they receive from middle leaders, especially in relation to behaviour. Middle leaders skilfully support teachers through working alongside them and through regular discussions about their work.
- The school has thorough systems in place for monitoring behaviour. Teachers are supported to write behaviour plans. As a result of this, there are very few instances of challenging behaviour and where there are, these are managed very well.
- The next area we agreed to look at was how effective leaders' practices are in securing improved attendance. This is because attendance is low when compared to the national average.
- The school has thorough processes in place to track pupils' attendance and there are clear systems in place for following up when pupils are not in school.
- A particularly successful part of the school's practice is to visit families at home when attendance is a concern. This is often done by the Family Support Team which has developed good relationships with families.
- Leaders are able to give examples of individual cases where the school has matched strategies to individual situations to promote increased attendance.
- The final area we looked at was assessment and curriculum. We agreed to look at these areas as they are key developments for the school at the moment.
- The present curriculum provides a clear, well-informed basis for teachers to plan from; however, the school is redeveloping its curriculum so that it can be even more responsive to the needs of individual pupils.
- Assessment processes are thorough and inform future teaching and feedback to parents. Teachers and teaching assistants communicate well about assessment so that opportunities to assess progress are not missed. The school is looking to further develop their assessment procedures in line with national changes.
- Curriculum implementation is well planned and generally well implemented, but in some situations teaching assistants missed opportunities to intervene and support pupils' learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- further develop the support teaching assistants provide for curriculum implementation.

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

Yours sincerely

Penny Barratt
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspectors carried out the following activities during the inspection:

- meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteachers
- meeting with a group of parents and three governors
- discussions with teachers and teaching assistants
- a phone conversation with the school improvement partner
- joint visits to classrooms with the headteacher and deputy headteacher
- scrutiny of the school's curriculum and assessment procedures
- a review of the school's analysis of attendance information
- a review of responses to Ofsted's questionnaires – including Parent View
- scrutiny of documents, including the school's development plan, curriculum plans, data on pupils' achievement and attendance, safeguarding information and records, the single central register and a review of safeguarding files.