

11 July 2019

Mr Robert Piner
Principal
Swalcliffe Park School Trust
Swalcliffe
Banbury
Oxfordshire
OX15 5EP

Dear Mr Piner

Short inspection of Swalcliffe Park School Trust

Following my visit to the school on 3 July 2019 with Simon Yates, 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 May 2015.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Along with other leaders, you provide an exceptionally safe haven where pupils thrive. Your evident commitment and determination to improve the quality of life for pupils and their families are at the heart of everything the school does.

Pupils make remarkable progress in their learning and development while at the school. You provide pupils with a tranquil environment in which dedicated, attentive and hugely knowledgeable staff support pupils particularly well. The positive impact this has on the academic achievements and emotional well-being of pupils can be clearly seen. During the inspection, the calm, sociable way in which pupils enjoyed the post-sports-day barbecue illustrated admirably how you enable pupils to manage situations successfully that they may otherwise find difficult. Pupils are rightly deeply proud of their school, and adults demonstrate the same pride about the progress that pupils make.

Staff have an exceptionally in-depth knowledge of individual pupil's needs and an expert understanding of autism, which supports their highly skilled work. The innovative 'quality of life' framework you have developed has a positive, life-changing impact on pupils and their families. You have addressed the area for improvement from the last inspection successfully and with vigour. Along with other leaders, you have established the school as a centre of excellence for pupils with autism.

Governors know and understand the school tremendously well. They share your passion and determination to improve outcomes for pupils. Governors strive continually to keep their knowledge up to date. They have developed highly effective strategies which keep them extremely well informed. An example of such strategies are whole-day conferences incorporating presentations from pupils and others involved in the life of the pupils. As a result, they confidently offer support and challenge to leaders, successfully ensuring that the quality of education remains exceptionally high across the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils are particularly well supported in all aspects of their well-being, by staff who fully understand exactly what pupils need. You ensure that all adults involved with pupils have time dedicated to sharing relevant information effectively. For example, pupils have time with their key worker built into each day, with detailed, written records of the conversation shared appropriately with other staff. This consistently strong communication and close collaborative working between staff guarantees that pupils' concerns are heard and extra help is put in place quickly. Pupils and their families fully appreciate this carefully tailored support.

Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements in the school are fit for purpose. Records are thorough and up to date, and relevant training enables staff to be highly vigilant in their roles. Pupils are taught extremely well how to stay safe. They confidently identify potential risks to their welfare and can articulately explain how to avoid them. Online safety is a particular focus, as many pupils have well-developed information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Leaders use effective systems that alert them quickly to any potentially unsafe online behaviour, and address this swiftly with pupils.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we focused on pupils' progress, how well staff enable pupils to manage their own behaviour effectively, and how successfully the curriculum meets pupils' needs.
- Pupils receive intensive, personal support that enables them to make exceptional progress in developing their confidence, self-esteem and independence. Your expert leadership of the therapeutic approach you have chosen provides pupils with invaluable, vital strategies to manage any anxiety and mental health issues effectively. For example, well-planned tutor times focus usefully on areas such as understanding complex emotions and the importance of exercise. Consequently, pupils develop the newfound capacity to concentrate on their academic learning, achieving aspirational academic and vocational qualifications and accreditations.
- You and other leaders assess and track pupils' progress comprehensively, with meticulous attention to detail. This ensures that you keep a careful focus on the impact of the school's work, adapting support skilfully as pupils' needs evolve. This wealth of information you gather is shared with pupils and their families as well as staff, helping everyone to work together for pupils' benefit. You constantly reflect on and develop this process, to ensure that everyone's

understanding of pupils' progress is as clear as it can be.

- Pupils are taught extremely well how to manage their own behaviour. Your continual, committed focus on enabling pupils to understand and self-regulate their emotions has an undeniably positive impact on their emotional well-being. You provide pupils with crucially useful strategies, which they understand well, to help them cope if they find themselves in a situation where they are struggling. For example, a 20-minute 'buffer time' between arrival at school and the start of lessons successfully reduces the anxiety many pupils feel during times of transition. Pupils fully appreciate the flexibility built into the school day.
- The inspirational curriculum meets pupils' needs precisely. The 'quality of life' framework is underpinned meticulously by the school's well-established core values of 'the 4 whys' (communication, self-management, independence and achievement). Regular, carefully devised surveys are completed by pupils, their families and staff, and these accurately inform the excellent provision that pupils receive. Alongside formal learning, pupils benefit extensively from other experiences that help them to understand their own needs, preparing them well for life outside of school. This approach enables pupils to succeed, and successfully improves their quality of life, alongside that of their families. Through the evident expertise and success, you have won parents' overwhelming trust and confidence, with one stating that 'the staff go above and beyond to accommodate my son's individual needs'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- current work to refine and evolve assessment and monitoring systems provides pupils, parents and staff with an even more useful oversight of pupils' 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 Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Maxine McDonald-Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you and other leaders to discuss a range of aspects, including safeguarding, behaviour, the curriculum and pupils' progress. We observed pupils arriving at school and talked to them while on the field at lunchtime. We visited lessons together, when inspectors also spoke to pupils. We visited the art GCSE exhibition, met with a group of pupils and spoke with a variety of staff. I met with members of the school's governing body and had a telephone conversation with a school improvement partner. Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's pupil,

staff and parent surveys, and an email from a parent, as well as speaking to another parent on the phone. Inspectors looked at a range of the school's documentation and a selection of pupils' work.