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Mrs Tina Harvey
Headteacher
Perseid School
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Dear Mrs Harvey

Short inspection of Perseid School

Following my visit to the school on 3 July 2019 with Jayne Jardine, 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 outstanding in March 2012.

This school continues to be outstanding.

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

You and your senior team provide excellent leadership within the school. Middle leadership is extremely well developed and plays a significant part in school improvement. Staff are very appreciative of leaders' commitment to reducing workloads and also to considering their emotional well-being. You invest in high-quality professional development for your staff and their specialist training benefits the pupils.

Your pupils are very obviously happy and enjoy school. They were able to tell inspectors about the subjects and activities they like best. Pupils talked about their friends and how the staff help them. Breaktimes are calm, well organised and pupils enjoy playing with the extensive range of equipment. Staff engage pupils in activities during play times but encourage them also to develop their independence. There are effective and positive working relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils are very well behaved across the school.

You have high expectations of pupils' attendance and it is thoroughly monitored. Attendance is slightly better than other special schools nationally. Fixed-term or permanent exclusions are rare.

You have successfully addressed the next steps identified at the previous inspection.

The school was asked to reflect the achievements and destinations of older pupils within further education in the school's own self-evaluation and action plans. The school now completes an annual audit of pupil leaver destinations. You were also asked to share outstanding practice beyond existing local partnerships. There is much evidence of you and your team working with additional partners and extending the influence and impact of your expertise. For example, your executive headship support and subsequent continued consultancy support to a local primary school enables this. Through your co-leadership of the Merton Special Teaching Alliance, the number of your staff involved in training and development work with other schools across London and beyond has risen.

Since the previous inspection, the school has continued to grow. The needs of the pupils are also changing. You now have a number of pupils with more complex behaviour and mental health support requirements. You recognise that developing the provision to fully meet the needs of this group will require the support of the local authority and health care providers. The only recent permanent exclusion was for a pupil in this group whose needs could not be met within the current provision.

The competent and committed governing board have high aspirations for the school. They know the school extremely well and provide a significant and appropriate level of both challenge and support to leaders. Governors are determined, for example, to secure the necessary additional resources to provide for the increasing number of pupils with complex behavioural and mental health needs.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your team have established a very strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Staff at all levels are acutely aware of the vulnerability of the pupils due to their individual needs. They say that the pupils are 'absolutely safe' within the school. Training and a focus on safeguarding during staff induction is well established and supported by robust procedures and policies. Training for staff has included female genital mutilation, mental health, gangs, online safety and the 'Prevent' duty. The school's personal, social and health education programme supports the pupils in understanding many aspects of staying safe. For example, pupils learn about the dangers of online grooming and sharing information. A personalised approach is also taken where the individual safeguarding needs of pupils require very specific teaching. Staff also work with parents around safeguarding issues associated with smart phones and computer games. All required pre-employment checks regarding the suitability of staff to work with children are completed. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Inspection findings

- The curriculum meets the needs of individual pupils exceptionally well. Separate curriculum pathways are matched thoughtfully by staff to different groups of pupils within the school. Pupils follow a very personalised curriculum with pathway groupings in the mornings and class-based groups in the afternoons.

Staff plan well differentiated tasks in literacy and numeracy lessons with next steps for learning clearly identified. The vast majority of pupils are engaged and interested in their learning and on task in lessons.

- Learning resources are interesting, varied and of high quality. Symbols are used in lessons effectively in order to support pupils' communication. Staff are very sensitive to individual pupils' needs and give them time to make choices and to process instructions. Pupils are relaxed and calm, interacting positively with staff and peers.
- The expressive arts provision is well established and a strength of the curriculum, contributing strongly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are impressive displays around the school of pupils' art work and posters of them showing their participation in performances.
- The school's vision of being 'an inspiring visionary school, blazing a trail for outstanding holistic learning' was demonstrated perfectly during the inspection. The arts week with the theme 'extinction rebellion' showed pupils fully engaged in a range of artistic activities centred around endangered species and the damaging effect of human actions on the environment. They talked to inspectors about their work with enthusiasm. One pupil explained that he was learning about endangered animals and how humans were responsible for destroying their homes. Other pupils were learning about the damaging impact of plastic on the natural environment. Another class were enjoying creating their own forest, accompanied by background forest sounds that added to their sensory experiences.
- Activities to develop pupils' attention and engagement are highly effective in both the upper and lower school. Pupils showed real delight and excitement during these sessions.
- Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education or training. The curriculum model, where pupils need to move from pathway groups to class-based groups on a regular basis, allows them to become comfortable with changes. In addition, there are different sites for upper and lower school, and the transition from key stage 2 to key stage 3 is supported by a well thought out programme. Pupils are confident about their transition to new classes.
- There are a good range of visits to the local community and beyond. Excellent use is made of the outdoor learning environment. Residential experiences promote independence for individual pupils. Older pupils are given specific roles and responsibilities in the school.
- Pupils relate their learning effectively to the world outside school. Members of the school council talk about how reading and mathematics help them when they go shopping. Pupils are also given the opportunity to participate in enterprise projects and charity days, promoting their independence.
- The personal, social and health education curriculum prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. The careers education programme helps pupils to decide on their next steps in education or training.
- The school provides exceptionally well for pupils' emotional development. The whole-school programme ensures that pupils' well-being is placed at the centre

of the school's work.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- The provision for the pupils with the most complex behavioural and mental health needs continues to be developed.

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

Yours sincerely

Joanna Tarrant
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, the associate headteacher and other members of your senior team. We also met with a group of middle leaders, newly qualified teachers and a number of other staff. In addition, inspectors met with the local authority school improvement adviser and pupils from the school council. We met with members of the governing board, who were joined via telephone by the chair. Inspectors visited classes, accompanied by members of the senior team, and they observed pupils during breaktimes. We scrutinised a range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and school development plan. Inspectors considered the 24 responses to the staff online survey. There were no responses to the pupil's online survey. We also considered the 17 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View survey and the six free-text responses.