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Ms Sue Davies
Harlow Fields School
Tendring Road
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Dear Ms Davies

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 15th December 2009 and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the sixth form students who met with me and to the vice-chair of the governing body to whom I spoke.

Since the previous inspection the school has gained Healthy School status.

As a result of the inspection on 15 and 16 October 2008, the school was asked to

- strengthen the role of the subject leaders in improving learning
- improve the use of assessment data to help teachers plan more effectively to meet the learning needs of all pupils
- accelerate pupils' learning through improved marking and through sharing accurate learning targets with individual pupils.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Since the previous inspection, progress has continued to accelerate as a result of the clear direction set for improvement by the headteacher and her senior team. The school's strategic improvement plan, effective self-evaluation and careful monitoring and evaluation have been instrumental in ensuring this continued improvement. Good change has been brought about successfully by ensuring all staff are involved in the drive for improvement and are well supported. School assessment information shows that pupils' progress has improved as a result of better quality teaching and learning. By the end of Year 11 in 2009, nine out of ten pupils reached their expected levels, with a third achieving beyond these. Sixth form students are



enabled to gain accreditation as part of Foundation Learning to promote independence and prepare them for their future beyond the school.

Core subject leaders have been given more responsibility in developing their subjects across the school, including working alongside class teachers. They are now involved in whole school planning and moderation of pupils' work. Good links have been established with local authority advisory teachers. As a result, subject leaders have become more confident and have improved their own expertise. The quality of teachers' lesson planning and subject delivery is now higher. In lessons, learning support assistants are deployed effectively to support small groups of pupils in their learning, as well as in supporting pupils' personal development targets.

Assessment procedures have been improved and now enable careful tracking of pupils' progress to be made, not only in their learning but also in their personal development. Teachers and learning support assistants are all involved in recording carefully the progress pupils make in lessons. This information is now being used more effectively by teachers to ensure their lesson planning meets the learning needs of all pupils. In a Key Stage 4 science lesson, for example, all pupils had individual learning targets linked to their attainment levels, being enabled to make progress commensurate with their capabilities. In addition, thrice yearly whole school moderation of pupils' levels of attainment enables rates of progress to be identified in line with the National Strategies Progression Guidance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. Analysis of the progress of different groups of pupils is enabling the school to identify where more support for specific groups of pupils may be needed.

All pupils now have individual curriculum and personal learning targets linked to their individual needs. These are communicated to pupils in a variety of ways to enable them to understand. Examples of this include written targets for older pupils, the use of physical objects, signing, visual representations such as the picture exchange communication system (PECS) and oral reinforcement during lessons. As a result, pupils' understanding of their targets is enhanced. Because pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are non-verbal, teachers set targets in relation to small steps in progress and record these visually for annual reviews with parents. During lessons, pupils receive good quality oral praise and encouragement and pupils' portfolios of work are carefully marked and annotated. Whole school moderation of these portfolios is now being used to inform planning for improvements in pupils' rates of progress.

Reports show that the school has benefitted from the challenge and support of the local authority school improvement team, the school having recently been removed from the 'schools causing concern' category.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.



Yours sincerely

James Bowden
Additional Inspector

