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Marie Hunter
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Dear Mrs Hunter

Short inspection of Pens Meadow School

Following my visit to the school on 24 January 2018 with Paul Elliott, 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 good in May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated very strong practice in specific areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

The school is very well led and managed. Senior leaders and governors have a clear understanding of the school's effectiveness. You use this well to inform action to further improve the quality of provision in the school.

You carefully consider what will achieve the best outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils in order to determine school improvement strategies. You work extremely effectively with staff, parents and carers, and pupils to help your pupils to thrive.

Staff know the pupils well. They plan suitably challenging activities, which are tailored to meet the needs of individual pupils. This allows pupils to make rapid progress from their different starting points. Staff take every opportunity to develop pupils' skills and understanding. As a result, pupils are consistently challenged to deepen their learning and develop their personal, social and emotional awareness.

Pupils are encouraged to make choices and do things for themselves. During the inspection, pupils selected the snacks that they preferred, and post-16 students set up the equipment for their physical education lesson. Where appropriate, pupils are expected to work independently and take responsibility for their own learning.

Literacy, numeracy and computing are embedded within the curriculum. For example, an agreed numeracy programme was introduced after the last inspection, so mathematical skills are developed through all subjects and therapy sessions.

Teaching is of a very high quality throughout the school. Pupils make consistently strong progress from their different starting points. However, leaders are aware that the quality of provision for students who have profound and multiple learning difficulty (PMLD) on the post-16 site does not yet match the high-quality provision evident elsewhere in the school. There are plans and capacity within the school that are very likely to address this.

Staff work very well with parents. The school's website is very informative and high-quality communication takes place on a regular basis through this means. Staff also take opportunities to talk to parents. The home-school diary is used well, and newsletters keep parents informed. Parents were also full of praise for the support that they receive from the family outreach team. As a result, almost all parents who made their views known during the inspection would recommend the school to another parent.

In common with their parents, pupils feel that their voice is heard and that their opinions matter. There is a code of conduct shared by staff and pupils that the pupils helped to develop. This contributes to the positive and inclusive ethos of the school and helps pupils to behave well.

Staff are highly skilled at managing pupils' behaviour. Consequently, the need for sanctions and additional behaviour plans is declining. Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and during social time. They are willing to take on responsibilities, and post-16 students act as sports leaders and support the learning of younger pupils.

The information that the school provides for education, health and care (EHC) plans is of a very high quality. Some of the plans that are in place are models of good practice, but the quality of information provided by outside agencies is inconsistent. Consequently, leaders have correctly identified improving the overall quality of EHC plans so that they have a greater impact on outcomes as an area for development.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture for keeping children safe throughout the school. All staff

are well trained and kept up to date about safeguarding issues. Leaders and staff have a very clear understanding of their responsibilities, and they are vigilant about the welfare of pupils. This aspect of the school's work is very well led.

Staff have developed collaborative working relationships with other key agencies to reduce the potential risks to pupils. Referrals are timely, and rapid action is taken if required. Leaders and staff follow up concerns thoroughly.

Processes for reporting concerns are clear and known by all staff. The school's single central record is compliant, and procedures to recruit, select and check staff are appropriate. Records are stored securely.

Pupils, staff and parents believe that pupils are safe and there are clear procedures within the school to ensure pupils' safety. The site is secure and pupils are taught to stay safe. For example, online safety and information about healthy relationships are embedded within the curriculum.

No concerns were raised about bullying during the inspection. Pupils and parents are confident that staff would deal quickly and effectively with any unkindness if it happened.

Inspection findings

- High-quality teaching is evident throughout the school. As learning is carefully planned, purposeful and engaging, it leads to strong progress. A variety of well-chosen resources enrich activities, and interesting displays celebrate pupils' achievements and aid learning.
- All staff follow the school's assessment policy, and consistent feedback helps pupils to improve their work. Assessment of pupils' progress throughout the school is accurate. It is used well to inform planning and timely interventions if required. This helps all groups of pupils make rapid progress during their time in the school.
- Almost all pupils make very strong progress in all aspects of their learning in every key stage. Older pupils complete suitable accreditation and achievements at key stage 4 inform bespoke 16–19 study programmes. All pupils move onto meaningful and appropriate destinations, and those who begin college courses sustain their places.
- The strengths that are evident at the pre-16 site are replicated within the post-16 provision. Teaching and outcomes are strong and students follow a tailored curriculum that is broad, balanced and challenging. Core skills in communication, English, mathematics and computing are developed within a wide range of appropriate topics. Work-related learning is also a key part of the post-16 provision, and many pupils complete tailored work experience.
- Learning in the post-16 centre is enhanced by visitors to school and trips outside of school, including a residential visit to an outdoor pursuits centre. Students are also given opportunities to enjoy dance, drama and a range of

sports and activities. Staff conscientiously promote healthy lifestyles.

- Currently, the quality of provision for students who have PMLD on the post-16 site does not yet match the high quality evident elsewhere in the school. Leaders have plans in place to address this.
- Leaders have identified improving the overall quality of EHC plans so that they have a greater impact on pupils' outcomes as an area for development. The information that the school provides for these plans is always of a high quality, but this is not consistently matched by outside agencies.
- Attendance has improved since the time of the last inspection, and all groups of pupils have similar rates of attendance. The majority of pupils have excellent attendance and, as absence is closely analysed, effective interventions are in place to improve the attendance of individual pupils. High-quality outreach support to families, team around the child meetings and input by key workers are all having a positive impact on improving attendance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- partnership working with outside agencies is further developed to ensure that they consistently provide high-quality information for EHC plans
- expertise from the pre-16 PMLD provision is used to enhance the provision for post-16 students who have PMLD.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Mosley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, other leaders and staff.
- The lead inspector met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body, and had a telephone conversation with a local authority officer.
- Short visits were made to most classrooms, and inspectors spoke to pupils formally and informally. Behaviour was observed at the start of the day, in lessons and during social time.
- The lead inspector visited the post-16 provision, which is on a different site

from the rest of the school.

- Twenty-four responses and six free-text comments on Parent View were considered. The team inspector spoke to parents at the start and end of the day.
- Various school documents were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and safety. Documents relating to safeguarding were checked, and the inspector looked at published information on the school's website.