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Mr Gordon Tillman
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mr Tillman

Short inspection of Oakley School

Following my visit to the school on 26 March 2019, with Catherine Davies and Simon Yates, Ofsted Inspectors, 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 March 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school has undergone significant change and you and your leadership team have worked tirelessly to support staff through the challenges created by establishing a new school site and leadership structure. As a result, staff are positive about the changes and are clear about leaders' expectations.

Our classroom visits showed the school to be a place where pupils enjoy learning and make good progress. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. The school ethos of 'work hard, be kind, have fun and stay safe' is embraced by the school community. One parent summed up the views of many, saying: 'The staff here are always so cheery, helpful and positive, with a can-do attitude. As a parent it is a comfort knowing that my child is in a great school, is happy and progressing.'

Pupils enjoy coming to school and are enthusiastic. They behave exceptionally well and are considerate of each other. They show respect for the adults supporting them and are welcoming to visitors.

Staff are proud to work at this school. They are confident to approach leaders with their ideas and concerns, and recognise the value that leaders place on their well-being. They appreciate the opportunities they are provided with to develop professionally.

Leaders have successfully addressed the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection. Teachers use accurate assessment information to plan effectively. They use questioning well to probe and broaden pupils' understanding. Most pupils feel sufficiently challenged by their work and achieve well in reading and writing. Leaders and governors use their skills and experience to monitor all aspects of the school's work. This ensures that nobody is complacent about addressing priorities for improvement in a timely way.

Leaders' work to enhance school systems to assess pupils' academic progress is embedded and used well. However, processes to monitor pupils' social and emotional development are not yet complete. We agreed that this should be a key priority going forward.

Parents who spoke to inspectors were positive about the progress their children have made since joining the school. They praised the school's holistic approach and broad curriculum. One parent commented: 'I am confident that my child will be employable. There are lots of opportunities at the school for them to find self-esteem and purpose in life.' However, a small number of parents expressed dissatisfaction in the communication procedures between home and school. Leaders have already started work to address this.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors fulfil their safeguarding duties successfully. Policies and procedures for keeping pupils safe are robust. Checks on the suitability of all staff, including regular visitors, are thorough. As a result, arrangements to safeguard pupils are effective.

Pupils are safe and say that adults help them to feel safe. They know that they can talk to staff in school if they have any worries or concerns. Importantly, pupils develop skills to protect themselves from harm. For example, some told inspectors about how to stay safe online when using social media.

All staff receive helpful training and regular updates to keep safeguarding at the forefront of their minds. Staff promptly report and record any concerns they have about pupils' welfare to the leaders responsible for safeguarding. However, occasionally written records of pupils' welfare do not fully detail the actions that leaders have taken to address any well-being concerns.

Inspection findings

- As well as checking safeguarding arrangements, inspectors focused on the impact of leaders' work with disadvantaged pupils and how effectively the curriculum meets the needs of individual pupils.
- Leaders are focused on helping disadvantaged pupils to do as well as they can. They use additional funding appropriately to enrich disadvantaged pupils' learning experiences. Leaders check carefully that their work makes a difference to pupils' reading, writing and mathematics outcomes. Governors hold leaders to

account rigorously for this aspect of the school's work. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils make strong progress in all areas of learning.

- The school's innovative curriculum is well planned, incorporating skills for life and facilitating pupils' independence. In addition to learning basic skills in reading, writing and number, pupils have access to an enriching range of interesting activities and experiences. Therapy sessions to develop pupils' skills and confidence complement the curriculum well and contribute effectively to pupils' well-being.
- Students in the sixth form benefit from a curriculum which evolves year on year. Leaders are passionate about ensuring that students can achieve success and are well prepared for the next stage of their education or life beyond the school. Students' employability skills are developed well. They receive impartial careers advice and take part in meaningful work experience, either within the school or in the wider community.
- Classroom visits showed pupils to be making good progress over time. Scrutiny of pupils' work and case studies, alongside teachers' own systems to track progress, showed evidence of pupils making good or better progress.
- However, teachers do not consistently consider pupils' prior knowledge when planning learning activities. When this is the case, pupils do not progress as well as they could.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- systems to assess and monitor pupils' progress are further developed, and incorporate pupils' wider curriculum outcomes
- the school's record-keeping procedures about pupils' welfare are strengthened
- the information about what pupils can do and understand is used consistently by teachers to plan suitable learning activities.

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

Yours sincerely

Emma Sanderson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors visited classrooms, monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, talking to pupils about their learning, and assessing the quality of pupils' work. Inspectors were accompanied by senior and

phase leaders during classroom visits. Inspectors assessed pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning in classrooms and around the school. Meetings were held with senior and phase leaders, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, staff, a group of parents, pupils, and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors took into account 27 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and accompanying free-text responses. Inspectors also considered 56 replies to the staff questionnaire and 20 responses to the pupil survey. A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including pupils' progress information, the school's self-evaluation, improvement planning, policies, minutes of governing body meetings and records of visits by external agencies.