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Mr Peter Stewart
Interim Headteacher
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Dear Mr Stewart

Short inspection of Wandle Valley School

Following my visit to the school on 13 March 2018, with Shaun Dodds, 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 January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Senior leaders have worked hard to put in place systems and structures to support education, such as a clear timetable so that pupils know what to expect each day and greater consistency in the curriculum so that pupils know what they can expect to learn throughout the year. Leaders have also been effective in creating a safe and purposeful place for their very vulnerable pupils to learn and make progress.

The vast majority of parents and carers value the work of the school highly, and are clear that their children are making progress, feel safe and like coming to school. Parents also praised the way that your staff communicate with them on a regular basis. They are well informed of their children's successes. Your work with parents on any difficulties that might arise is also valued.

In addition to effective teaching, the school provides important support from its budget to improve the well-being and resilience of pupils. There is a relevant focus on gaining important life skills and effective preparation for the pupils' next phase of education. This includes high-quality careers advice and support to access college placements and the world of work.

Many of the pupils have had negative experiences of school before they start at Wandle Valley. This is because of the significant barriers that they face to their learning. You and your staff work well to build effective relationships with pupils and

their parents and carers so that most pupils re-engage effectively with their education, enjoy coming to school and make progress.

You evaluate the school's strengths and areas for development effectively. You acknowledge that more work needs to be done to further improve pupils' outcomes in mathematics, develop the role of governors in holding leaders to account and embed the systems for tracking pupils' progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

Senior leaders have ensured that all staff have appropriate training and regular updates related to child protection. Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The school has clear procedures in place to support vulnerable pupils, including support for their social and emotional development. The governor with responsibility for safeguarding monitors and evaluates the school's work well and provides effective support and challenge to leaders. The school works well with external agencies, including effective work with local authority officers to safeguard pupils who are not currently attending school.

Staff know pupils very well and know how to report any concerns that may arise. Leaders have effective systems in place to address concerns and they take prompt action when necessary. Leaders meet regularly to discuss the support that pupils need and to respond swiftly to any changes to pupil well-being. Pupils, including the small number of girls, said that they feel safe at the school.

The school is a calm and welcoming environment. Pupils are happy to be in school, and they behave well in lessons. Any inappropriate behaviour is managed well. Leaders record behaviour incidents effectively and use this information to inform future practice. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including how to stay safe online.

Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry was to look at how effective leaders and managers have been at improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the school. This is because it was identified as an area for improvement at the last inspection. There is clear evidence that you have been effective in your steps to improve consistency in the quality of teaching throughout the school. All teaching environments are well organised and purposeful.
- On our visits to classrooms, inspectors saw evidence of pupils' positive attitudes to learning and towards the adults who work with them. The support that they received from adults was effective, but in a small number of cases pupils relied too much on this support. The work that we saw in pupils' books showed that all pupils are making progress over time, in all subjects, including those that they had chosen as options. We agreed that the work in some pupils' books could be better presented.

- Teachers use a range of strategies to engage pupils, including using topics that they know are of interest to their class. Pupils are proud of their work and can talk about their achievements well. We saw that pupils do not always read the comments that teachers have written in their books and so leaders have developed a marking policy to address this.
- In your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness you said that pupils' attendance and the number of fixed-term exclusions are areas that you want to improve, so we agreed to look at the impact of the school's actions. We found evidence of a range of positive and creative strategies to improve attendance, which include supporting parents to bring their children to school, home visits and adjusting the timings of the school day for some pupils. The parents who spoke to us were very happy with the certificates and other rewards that you gave to the pupils for good attendance and to celebrate other personal successes. The pupils also like these strategies.
- The number of exclusions at the school has not reduced significantly over time, but these exclusions are now for shorter periods of time, typically for one day, which means that pupils are missing education for less time. Parents said that you only exclude as a last resort and they recognise that you work hard to avoid pupils being away from school. You are developing a range of alternatives to exclusion and this work needs to continue. It must also be monitored carefully by governors. You recognise that matching the curriculum to the needs of the pupils more closely is likely to result in better attendance and you have clear plans to develop your curriculum offer further.
- Finally, we decided to look at how leaders and governors know that pupils are progressing well. We found that there was clear evidence that across the school most pupils are improving their skills and knowledge in a range of subjects. You also have a range of effective strategies in place to support pupils if their progress starts to slow down. At present, your systems for tracking progress are more developed in the primary phase of the school. You are aware of this and you have robust plans in place to ensure that this good practice becomes the norm.
- Your own monitoring of the school's work tells you that progress in mathematics is not currently as strong overall as it could be. We agreed with your analysis, and we saw that you have taken effective action to improve this, including the appointment of an experienced specialist maths teacher.
- You and your chair of governors agree that the governing body needs to play a stronger and more active role in monitoring the work of the school, including how well pupils are progressing in their academic work and the improvements that they make in their social and emotional development. The chair and her governing body have developed a strategy to secure permanent leadership at the school and to make sure that governance is strengthened. This work must continue so that the school continues to improve and to ensure that leaders are held to account more robustly.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they further improve governance to more effectively hold school leaders to account
- they continue to develop systems to track pupils' progress, particularly beyond the primary phase
- they take action to ensure improved outcomes in mathematics across the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Gary Pocock
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, the deputy headteacher, the two assistant headteachers and the safeguarding lead. We had conversations and meetings with parents and the chair of governors. Inspectors visited classrooms in all key stages, accompanied by either you or your deputy headteacher. During those visits, we talked to a wide range of pupils and staff and, with leaders, looked at pupils' work to evaluate their learning over time. Inspectors held meetings with pupils to hear their views. A range of documentation was evaluated, including the school's self-evaluation, plans for development, behaviour and attendance information, safeguarding records and information about pupils' progress. We also considered responses to the staff survey and the parent survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's survey for pupils.