

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Ms D Rattley  
Headteacher  
Chadsgrove School  
Meadow Road  
Catshill  
Bromsgrove  
Worcestershire  
B61 0JL

Dear Ms Rattley

### **Short inspection of Chadsgrove School**

Following my visit to the school on 12 January 2016 with Pamela Thomas, 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 outstanding in November 2012.

### **This school continues to be outstanding.**

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school continues to maintain an excellent balance between caring for each pupil and ensuring that they make the best progress they can, academically, socially and personally. Both pupils and parents appreciate what Chadsgrove provides. One pupil summed up the view expressed by a number of her peers when she said, 'If you are feeling down then coming to school puts a smile on your face. Teachers make you more confident.'

It is clear that you, leaders, staff and governors are highly ambitious for the school. Far from standing still since the last inspection, you have all continually sought to improve. Governors rightly praise you and your senior colleagues for your dedication and ambition. They explained how you constantly set your sights on a way to make the school even better and then do everything in your power to make it happen. During the inspection we saw plenty of evidence of the impact of this tenacious approach. One example is the way in which you are now training new teachers very successfully to work in your setting. Another is the innovative research work in which the school is involved.

Behaviour is excellent. Pupils are co-operative, enthusiastic and hardworking, and the school is welcoming, warm and friendly. Wherever we went during the day, we saw staff and pupils greeting each other by name or signing greetings. You clearly know all the pupils well, as do your senior staff. You all take time to stop to speak to pupils, encourage them and respond as you walk around the school. One pupil we met in a corridor, for example, was delighted to tell you that she had put her head under water for the first time during a swimming lesson, and you took the time to listen and to congratulate her.

In the last year, the school rightly identified that some pupils were not making the excellent progress in English that you were aiming for them to make. Leaders concluded that this was related to the communication needs of some pupils not being fully met. After careful thought, you have introduced a more specific focus on communication throughout the school. During the inspection, this focus was evident in a range of ways. My colleague and I saw pupils using technology that allowed them to communicate and interact using only their eyes. Pupils were clearly developing their skills in using this tool and thoroughly enjoying it. We saw good use of signing and symbols, together with a wide range of communication aids, to allow pupils to express their thoughts and explain what they had learnt. Staff used appropriate vocabulary and phrasing to develop pupils' language skills and understanding. All of this action is having a positive impact on the progress that pupils are making.

Since the previous inspection, the school has placed a greater emphasis on enabling older pupils to take a range of qualifications that will help them with the next stage of their education, training or employment. Pupils can take their qualifications in Key Stage 4, Key Stage 5 or both depending on their needs. This approach is working well and pupils are gaining more accreditation than past pupils have done. Supported work experience has been introduced for sixth form learners, which is proving successful in helping them to develop their skills and confidence.

You have identified that a focus on mental health would benefit pupils of all ages in the school. An audit of the school's practice is being completed. Work is starting to support pupils in expressing their emotions.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Pupils have positive and warm relationships with staff and feel well supported. The pupils we spoke to during the inspection were very clear that they could always seek support from a member of staff. The school is highly aware of the need to continually seek ways in which pupils with the most complex needs can communicate any concerns they have and express their views and feelings on a day-to-day basis. Your involvement with a mental health research project is assisting with this important work and we discussed ways in which this could be extended further to bring together your work on communication and well-being.

The safeguarding policy is detailed and up to date with current guidance and issues, although the most recent version is not on the school's website. Child protection cases are carefully recorded. The school is thoroughly involved in working with other agencies to resolve issues and to give pupils in need the best possible support. Staff at all levels are well informed about what they should do if they have a concern about a pupil's well-being. Crucially, they have a good understanding of what might indicate that a child is unsafe or in danger of being harmed. They know how important their different roles are in teaching pupils how to keep themselves safe outside of school. Leaders keep a close eye on who has attended safeguarding training and staff are given 'catch-up' sessions if they miss anything so that they are always up to date. Recent training has included a focus on extremism and radicalisation. This has had a positive impact on increasing the staff's understanding of the potential vulnerabilities of the pupils they work with, particularly to the influences that they might encounter through social networking or in new situations. There is a strong emphasis on e-safety. Pupils are taught from an early age how to use the internet safely, for example, to share only appropriate information online and use social networking sites well.

### **Inspection findings**

- The school has a thorough overview of the progress that pupils make in a range of different aspects of their development. The school's assessment information indicates that the majority of pupils make outstanding progress over the time they spend at the school. A particular strength is the progress they make in developing their independence, resilience and readiness for the world after school.
- Leaders are highly analytical. The school's involvement in a range of research and investigation work helps to ensure that barriers to learning, however complex, are turned into questions to be answered. When a pupil is not making progress, whether in their personal and social development or in their academic work, teachers and leaders work closely together to identify the barriers. From this, they plan in minute detail what steps they need to take. Innovative and thoughtful approaches to teaching pupils have had a clear impact on improving outcomes for individuals.
- Leaders have a range of assessment information in various forms. Some of this is innovative, for example short videos annotated to capture, as well as analyse, the skills that the pupils with the more complex needs are demonstrating over time. You are considering carefully how best to bring this information together to come to a sophisticated conclusion about how well pupils are progressing and whether any further improvements could be made to each aspect of your provision.
- Pupils with the most complex needs receive careful attention to meet their personal care, medical and communication requirements. Their lessons are interesting and stimulating. The small steps of progress that they make are carefully recorded and communicated clearly to parents.

- When pupils join the school, great care is taken to assess their needs very thoroughly. Sometimes staff are given additional specialist training to meet very complex or rare needs. Medical staff, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and other professionals are all involved in assessing pupils' needs at the outset and meeting those needs from then on.
  
- The school talks and listens carefully to pupils in Year 9 to find out what their ambitions and desires are for the future. The pathways they then follow in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form are designed to help them to achieve their aims. At the end of their time in the sixth form, learners progress to a range of appropriate destinations.
  
- Pupils have a highly positive attitude to school. They attend whenever they can. Almost all absence is the result of genuine illness, often linked to pupils' disabilities and complex medical needs. The school follows up any non-attendance rigorously. Where pupils have to be away from school for an extended period of time, the school keeps in close contact with families and provides work for pupils to do, if appropriate. Pupils are helped to reintegrate to school as soon as they can.
  
- Pupils have the opportunity to attend a wide range of clubs – 45 at the last count. These are carefully tailored to meet the wide range of pupils' needs and interests. During lunchtime on the day of the inspection, the choir was completing its final rehearsal before performing alongside around 6,000 other children and young people at a major concert venue the next day. Other pupils were taking part in sports outside, reading quietly in the library with staff and attending a sensory session. Lunchtime was well organised, safe, calm and relaxed.
  
- The governing body is dedicated, well informed and well led. Governors want the school to go from strength to strength and it has. However, they are not complacent. Recently they have begun to evaluate the effectiveness of their own practice, so they can become even better.
  
- Parents and carers to whom inspectors spoke during the inspection, and those who expressed their views in writing, were highly positive about the experiences that their children receive at Chadsgrove, the progress they make, and the support that they receive as parents.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- refine the use of all assessment information so that it is even more valuable in helping the school to evaluate all aspects of its work, having confidence in the excellent non-data based assessment methods that are already being used, such as the annotated films
  
- consider how to bring together elements from the work on improving communication with elements from the mental health project to best support the pupils with the most complex needs to communicate their feelings and concerns.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Worcestershire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Morris-King  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

My colleague and I met with you, your senior leadership team, the Chair of the Governing Body and five other governors. I held a meeting with eight staff with various different roles to discuss safeguarding. My colleague met with 17 parents in two different groups. We looked at a range of documentation, including the single central record of checks on staff, records related to safeguarding, documents about the quality of teaching, governors' records and information about achievement, behaviour and attendance. We observed pupils arriving at school in the morning. We visited short parts of 12 lessons. In these visits we focused particularly on your work to improve communication and on the pupils with the most complex needs. We observed the dining room and playground at lunchtime and visited clubs. Throughout the day, we spoke to pupils about their experience of school.