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Mrs Julia James
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs James

Short inspection of Bedelsford School

Following my visit to the school on 23 February 2016 with Mary Geddes, 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 September 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 has grown in size and continues to meet the needs of pupils who have a wide range of profound and multiple learning difficulties or physical disabilities. An extensive building project, completed this term, has created additional and remodelled learning spaces. The hydrotherapy pool and outdoor spaces have been improved and the building has been refurbished throughout. Pupils were actively involved in much of the decision making and worked with staff on plans for the development of the site. Leaders and governors did not allow any of this to distract them from continuing to raise teaching and learning standards across the school and have worked hard to minimise any disruption to staff and pupils.

The school is a calm and welcoming place. Aspirations are high throughout the school and pupils are challenged and supported to achieve as much as they possibly can. Everyone works together to ensure that pupils are as independent as possible. Lots of opportunities are provided for pupils to experience the same things as their peers in mainstream schools. This includes helping them to enjoy their social lives as well as making progress towards their learning targets. Learning activities take place outside in the local community whenever possible and staff are resourceful in overcoming potential hurdles and ensuring that pupils are always safe.

Pupils continue to make excellent progress from their starting points. Assessment information is used effectively and consistently across the school. Teachers ensure that even small steps of progress are captured and built upon. They use a wide range of measures and methods to assess social, communication and physical progress, as well as achievement in subjects. Individual learning outcomes are constantly reviewed to provide further challenges for pupils to work towards. Teachers, support staff and therapists work together to ensure that pupils' targets are meaningful and take account of all their identified needs. Parents and pupils are actively involved in these discussions, which inform education, health and care plans, as well as regular reviews.

The single identified area for improvement from the last inspection has been addressed. The recent building programme included the development of the first floor accommodation which is now a well-equipped learning space for the new sixth form. Learners are able to access this space for the first time by using the recently installed lift. Current learners are benefiting from a curriculum that is appropriate to their needs and externally accredited. However, the number of learners in the sixth form is small and further learning pathways are still being developed. Leaders have recognised that any further expansion will need to be planned carefully to ensure that standards remain high and staff receive appropriate training.

Leaders and governors have evaluated the school's strengths and weaknesses very accurately. They draw on the advice of other professionals to confirm their findings and identify further improvements. They are constantly striving for the school to be even better and will not compromise the excellent reputation that they have as an outstanding provider. They work very closely with other mainstream and special schools to moderate learning outcomes, share good practice and keep up to date with the latest research findings. The school is currently working to acquire sponsorship from the Orchard Hill College Academy Trust (OHCAT), with the academy conversion planned to take place on 1 April 2016. Leaders have worked with the whole school community and all stakeholders to develop a five-year development plan. They aim to ensure the school can improve and expand further, without compromising the high standards it has consistently maintained.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements and procedures are fit for purpose and remain a high priority for everyone. Leaders and the designated governor regularly check to ensure that the school's systems and practices remain effective. They have undertaken training in safer recruitment practices and the latest statutory guidance is reflected in all policies. All the required employment checks are carried out and arrangements for inducting new staff to the school are robust. Pupils benefit from high-quality personal and health care which is carried out appropriately and safely. The site is secure and pupils are kept safe when moving around the building independently. Extensive risk assessments, which take account of individual health and care needs, are conducted for any off-site activities. Child protection roles and responsibilities are known and understood by all staff. They receive regular training updates and know how to alert leaders to any concerns they may have. Parents and staff are confident that pupils are safe and

well cared for. Staff know all pupils and their families very well and work closely with other professionals to ensure that pupils get access to the services that they need.

Inspection findings

- Leaders monitor the quality of teaching very effectively. They have ensured that standards remain high and most pupils make excellent progress from their starting points. They recognise when any improvements are needed and put further interventions in place quickly. For example, when standards in English fell behind those in mathematics last year, leaders ensured that a whole-school focus on promoting communication skills addressed this quickly and gaps have now closed.
- The majority of staff share the vision for the school expressed by leaders and governors and developed after consultation with all staff, parents and partners. However, a very small minority express some concerns about the pace of change and the quality of support provided by leaders. Leaders have recognised this and have made staff well-being a focus for future training events.
- Staff benefit from an extensive programme of professional development opportunities. This has helped to support new staff and provide further professional accreditation to those aspiring to leadership roles.
- All teachers, therapists and support workers are actively involved in agreeing pupils' learning targets and helping them make rapid progress. They do this by making sure that all learning activities are closely aligned to the needs of individual pupils, and that key skills are constantly reinforced and practised. For example, all staff promote the development of good communication skills wherever possible. They take account of different abilities and levels of understanding, and pupils are supported to communicate using the best method for them. Many pupils use assistive technologies very effectively to express their views, make choices and move around independently.
- Systems for monitoring attendance and to follow up absences are managed effectively. Many pupils attend very well and overall attendance rates have been maintained since the last inspection. Some pupils are frequently absent due to their complex medical conditions. The school ensures that home tuition is provided and liaises effectively with hospital schools when necessary. They provide effective support for any health needs and work closely with parents to ensure that pupils can attend regularly. Consequently, every pupil attends as well as they are able and interruptions to learning are kept to a minimum.
- Parents are very positive about the school and can recognise how their children benefit from the high-quality learning opportunities and care provided by staff. They are invited to visit the school on a regular basis and are kept informed through the extensive information provided on the school's website. Their views and opinions are sought and acted upon, and have helped to determine the content of the next school development plan.
- Governance remains a strength of the school. Governors use their considerable expertise and detailed knowledge of the school to support and challenge leaders to make improvements. They have carefully considered the proposed academy conversion and are working closely with the sponsor to ensure that a seamless transition takes place.

- The local authority has provided effective support from the same consultant over many years. The authority regularly draws on the school's expertise as an exemplar of good practice. For example, leaders led a review of assessment practices within the borough. Regular visits and checks on standards are made. These inform termly reports to the governing body to help them judge how effective the school is.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the sixth form provision makes full use of the new facilities and further learning pathways are developed to meet the needs of all learners as the provision expands
- staff continue to be supported, to allow them to consolidate recent changes and engage fully with the further improvements identified in the new school development plan.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Cox
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher. Inspectors also met with a group of teachers and a group of support staff, the Chair and members of the governing body and with a representative of the local authority. Inspectors met with a parent and evaluated the school's own parental surveys. Pupils were spoken to informally throughout the inspection and inspectors evaluated their responses to the school's pupil surveys. Account was taken of the 23 staff questionnaires completed. Inspectors made a number of short visits to all classes, accompanied by senior leaders. They also spoke to some therapists and nursing staff. A range of documentation was reviewed, including the school's self-evaluation, development plans, pupils' progress information and evidence of safeguarding arrangements.