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Paul Williams
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Williams

Short inspection of Shaftesbury High School

Following my visit to the school on 1 March 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 November 2010.

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 continued to grow and evolve since the last inspection in 2010. Pupils' needs are more complex and the proportion of pupils with autistic spectrum conditions has grown. In September 2015, the Autistic Resource Centre opened. This is a dedicated centre to meet the needs of pupils with more complex autism. Through all these changes, you have ensured that high standards have been maintained and the school continues to improve.

You have embedded a culture of high expectations. Leaders make sure that pupils achieve all that they are capable of, both academically and in terms of personal development. They also make sure that pupils receive therapies, counselling and practical support as appropriate. As a result, pupils are very well prepared for their future placements. All transfer successfully and remain in education, employment or training when they leave Shaftesbury High School.

Leaders make sure that pupils have the opportunity to study subjects which interest them, and in which they can achieve success. A wide range of accredited courses is on offer. These include entry level and pre-entry level qualifications. Most-able pupils study some GCSEs at local high schools, supported by staff from Shaftesbury. In one or two cases, this integration has resulted in a permanent transfer to mainstream education. Older students attend part-time college courses in readiness

for full-time placements when they are ready to move on. As a result of the school's flexible approach, pupils achieve their full potential.

At the time of the last inspection you were asked to use the information held about pupils' progress to demonstrate clearly to parents, governors and other stakeholders how well the school was performing overall. This area for improvement has been fully addressed. The school now publishes helpful leaflets on an annual basis. These provide clear, visual information on how well pupils are doing. They also inform parents about how leaders have adapted their approach to assessment in response to new requirements and what accreditation pupils have achieved.

The quality of feedback to pupils regarding their work is not of the same consistently high standard, however. As a result, leaders' checks on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are not fully informed by the ongoing daily assessment that teachers and other adults undertake in lessons.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. The designated governor for safeguarding takes a very active role in checking procedures. He looks at a wide range of documentation and information held regarding safeguarding to make sure that all the requirements remain met. The designated governor reports back to the full governing body on a regular basis.

Leaders make sure that all staff have been trained in child protection, and this is revisited through monthly updates. Staff have recently received information on relevant issues such as child sexual exploitation and the prevention of radicalisation and extremism.

Leaders make referrals to external agencies as appropriate, and will challenge these agencies if they judge their response to be unsatisfactory. For example, if it takes too long for an agency to complete their evaluation.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have ensured that the school remains at the forefront of developments in the education of pupils with special educational needs or disability. They have high expectations of both staff and pupil performance and balance this effectively with the provision of support where needed. As a result, talent is nurtured, there is a strong team ethic and staff morale is high.
- Leaders have devised innovative and robust new assessment systems to reflect changes to the national system for assessment and the National Curriculum. Working alongside a group of other local special school leaders, they have created a detailed structure covering all subject areas. Records include the level of support a pupil has needed in order to complete a task as well as their achievement of the task itself. Structures have been set up which will, in time, demonstrate very clearly exactly how much progress a

pupil has made. Existing systems in place prior to these recent changes were equally robust. Pupils make outstanding progress from their varied starting points.

- The quality of feedback given to pupils about their work is not as strong. Leaders' expectations regarding the form feedback should take, and the frequency with which it is given, are not clearly understood and implemented by some teachers and other adults.
- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of pupils extremely well. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are usually taught by their form tutor, while older pupils are taught by a greater number of subject specialists. This means that pupils settle well into the secondary school environment and are very well prepared to access accredited courses during Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.
- Governors have not rested on their laurels. They receive reports and presentations from leaders on aspects of the school's work and ask relevant questions about these. Governors' understanding of what is happening in school is deepened because they visit the school regularly to find out for themselves. For example, one governor explained how she visits the school to meet with a subject leader. They discuss planning and assessment in the subject. They also talk about the impact of enrichment activities, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, in enhancing the curriculum. Governors are conscientious in ensuring that their statutory requirements remain met.
- The middle leadership team has grown since the last inspection, and holds significant responsibility in specific areas of the school's work. They are enthusiastic and welcome the opportunities they are given to undertake professional development, which further develops their leadership skills. Middle leaders relish the opportunity they are given to be involved in setting the school's priorities for improvement and do not shy away from holding others to account when needed.
- The personalised additional learning support (PALS) system is highly effective in meeting the needs of individual pupils. The PALS team consider referrals made by other members of staff and commission focused, specific support to make sure that the pupil has all their needs met. This support may take many forms, for example: counselling; reading support; help with medical needs; additional support in class; and speech and language therapy. A senior leader checks on the progress of pupils carefully and reviews the support provided on a weekly basis. As a result, pupils involved with the PALS team make at least as much progress as others in the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' outcomes are further improved through consistently high-quality feedback regarding the standard of pupils' work and robust systems to check that this is effective.

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

Yours sincerely

Gaynor Roberts
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, middle leaders and a group of four governors. They also visited classrooms to observe teaching and learning. These observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher and senior deputy headteacher. A range of documentation was scrutinised, including information about safeguarding, assessment procedures and pupils' progress. Inspectors scrutinised information relating to a sample of pupils, including their books, annual review reports and information about their progress and attainment.