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18 September 2018

Mrs Rachel Weldon  
Principal  
St Catherine's School  
Grove Road  
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Isle of Wight  
PO38 1TT

Dear Mrs Weldon

### **Short inspection of St Catherine's School**

Following my visit to the school on 10 July 2018 with Mark Bagust, 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 St Catherine's School was judged to be good in June 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You lead the school with determination to ensure that pupils engage in learning and make good progress from their starting points. You are supported ably by your vice-principal and wider leadership team, whose members share your vision and care for the pupils at the school. Teachers, therapists and support staff follow your expectation that all pupils should achieve of their best. The vast majority of staff who responded to the staff survey said that they are proud to work at the school and enjoy their work. As a result of your firm commitment and strong leadership, pupils are supported well and thrive at St Catherine's School.

Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school. They feel that staff support them well by setting work that is challenging and tailored to their needs. They value the school council and, in discussion, used examples such as choosing new play equipment to highlight its success. Pupils get to lessons quickly and are ready to learn from the outset. The routines and values that you have put in place are respected by all, resulting in exemplary behaviour throughout the school. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are supportive of the school. They feel that staff go to great lengths to meet the needs of their children. One parent commented, 'We feel truly blessed to have a place at St Catherine's.'

Leaders and governors have addressed successfully the areas identified for

improvement at the previous inspection. All teachers now use the school's system for planning and tracking pupils' progress. Leaders and staff use this system effectively, helping them to have a much better understanding of the progress that pupils are making. Staff are beginning to share good practice regularly. In addition, a highly developed focus on individual pupil needs within the curriculum allows teachers and therapists to work together to provide a holistic learning package. Teaching is typically highly effective in promoting learning. However, some pupils' targets are not sufficiently challenging and support staff are not directed well enough in lessons, which sometimes slows learning. You have also correctly recognised that despite attendance being comparable to that in other, similar schools, more can be done to support those struggling to attend. You have effective plans in place which are already beginning to have an impact on rates of attendance.

Your sixth-form students complete a three-year programme that combines academic progress with a focus on skills to support transition to life after school. A 'five-step independence' ranking system encourages them to make key personal decisions for themselves.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are effective. The single central record details accurately the robust employment checks that leaders carry out on staff or other adults in the school. Adults are trained appropriately in all areas of child protection and know what actions to take to keep pupils safe from harm.

The school works effectively with other agencies to make sure that pupils are safe. Staff maintain useful relationships with a range of other professionals to support highly vulnerable pupils. You and your staff show a strong commitment to pupils' well-being. Pupils say that they feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe. They know whom to speak to if they are worried.

### **Inspection findings**

- Leaders' effective action has led to improvements in attendance. Key staff challenge absence, and expectations are rising. Effective monitoring routines are in place, with a high rate of contact with parents. The school has invested in external support to help refine its practice. On the occasions that pupils do not attend school, staff work to find out why and to establish where they are. Pupils respond well to this high level of care and many are attending more regularly than previously. However, you acknowledge that there is more work to be done so that attendance rates continue to improve.
- You have implemented a rigorous system for monitoring pupils' progress. This is increasingly well used through all levels of leadership and through all areas of the curriculum. This is helping to improve teachers' planning. However, there are still areas where pupils' targets are not challenging enough in order to help all groups of pupils make rapid progress. In addition, sometimes support staff are not used

effectively in class.

- Leaders have designed a broad and balanced curriculum that supports progress. They have planned learning carefully in order to ensure that all pupils have access to subjects that match pupils' specific needs. There is strong collaboration between the school's teachers and therapists. As a result, pupils gain in confidence and are able to participate in a range of activities. Leaders have extended the wider curriculum through the effective delivery of a diverse range of subjects and courses. These rich experiences support pupils to find success and develop resilience.
- You have passionate and committed governors who bring a wide range of skills to the strategic leadership of the school. Their wider knowledge and expertise have enabled you to increase accountability at all levels and improve standards.
- Members of the governing body are rigorous in their pursuit of high standards, challenging leaders during scheduled meetings and visiting regularly to check the accuracy of leaders' reports. Governors have a very accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They appreciate the work of staff and are keen to support you with the school's next steps.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to improve rates of attendance
- continue to improve teaching and learning by ensuring that pupils' targets are sufficiently challenging and support staff are used more effectively.

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 Isle of Wight. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Gary Tostevin  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors observed teaching and learning and reviewed samples of pupils' work in all areas of the school. Most observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors met with you, senior leaders, teachers and support staff, as well as with the chair of the board of trustees and two governors. The lead inspector held a telephone call with a representative of the local authority. Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including: leaders' evaluations of the school's performance; minutes of the governing body's meetings; policies; safeguarding

records; records of pupils' attendance and behaviour; and information about pupils' progress. They also evaluated the school's website. Inspectors spoke to pupils during the day. Inspectors considered the 28 responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff, and the 34 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including the 33 written comments from parents.