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Mr Michael Reeves
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mr Reeves

Short inspection of Garratt Park School

Following my visit to the school on 18 September 2018 with Sam Nowak, 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 June 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of outstanding as a result of this inspection.**

Since the last inspection, there have been a number of significant changes to the leadership of the school. This has included the appointment of a new chair of the governing body, and the retirement of the previous headteacher. So far, governors have not been successful in appointing a permanent headteacher. Consequently, issues relating to leadership capacity, curriculum planning, and pupil underperformance have arisen.

As an interim measure, you took on the role of acting headteacher in September 2017. Since taking up this post, you have enhanced the leadership team with the appointment of two new assistant headteachers. Despite these recent changes, staff feel that your measured and realistic approach has provided them with security and consistency.

You have established a calm and purposeful school that reflects your commitment to providing the best for your pupils. Staff, pupils, and parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. As a result, you have seen an improvement in behaviour, and incidents of poor behaviour have reduced.

Pupils and staff follow a clear set of values that has received public recognition and has brought the community together. Pupils around the school are respectful of one

another and enjoy going to school.

Leaders have worked with four similar special schools to develop a bespoke assessment system. This measures progress across the national curriculum subjects, as well as communication and personal development. Currently, you are using this tool to monitor and analyse progress in these areas. Work is under way to improve this system so that it is able to take account of pupils' starting points.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Parents feel that the school provides a safe environment for their children. Those responsible for safeguarding work closely with other agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Leaders are acutely aware of the particular safeguarding issues that relate to their pupils. Staff remain confident and competent in keeping pupils safe and healthy at all times due to the comprehensive training programme that is in place.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed the key lines of enquiry. This inspection focused on the impact of leaders' actions to continuously improve the school. We also looked at how well pupils are challenged to make the best possible progress across the curriculum. Lastly, we considered how successfully pupils are supported to keep themselves and others safe.
- Leaders have a strong belief in the abilities of the staff team. This has earned them high levels of trust and commitment, and led to a strong sense of community throughout the school. The teachers and teaching assistants that I spoke to told me that they feel their contributions to the school are valued.
- The management of the education, health and care plan process is meticulous. Detailed quality assurance and high-quality feedback to staff have raised the standard of report writing by making expectations completely clear. However, the curriculum is not well designed to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding in some subjects. Subject leaders need further training and development to ensure that lessons are planned more effectively to build on pupils' prior learning and help them to make better progress.
- From looking at pupils' work and spending time in lessons, there is evidence of some high-quality teaching within the school. Activities and resources are well matched to the desired learning outcomes and teachers have high expectations, resulting in greater levels of engagement. However, this is inconsistent. Some pupils are disengaged due to a lack of challenge or consideration of individual learning needs.
- As a result, there is variation in pupils' outcomes between subjects and groups of pupils. For example, the school's own assessment information shows that progress in mathematics and computing is significantly below that in English. Although leaders have been able to identify these issues, little has been done to

address them.

- Pupils have access to a personalised curriculum that prepares them well for life in modern Britain. This includes daily sessions where they consider local and global issues, for example knife crime. Where appropriate, other professionals, including the police, are brought in to advise. The least able pupils also benefit from additional support to develop their independence. They are taught about crossing the road independently and to develop other important life skills.
- Pupils are encouraged to be good citizens and acquire an understanding of one another's needs. Through the curriculum, pupils develop an awareness of lesbian, gay and bisexual issues, and respect for other religions.
- Pupils in Year 11 have access to a broadening range of accreditation opportunities, including relevant computing qualifications. Last year, all pupils, including those with more complex needs, left school with at least five qualifications at entry level 2 or above. At lunchtime, a high number of pupils access a wide variety of extra-curricular activities. This includes arts and computing clubs.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leadership is strengthened by developing the role of subject leaders
- the curriculum is well designed to ensure that lessons are planned carefully to build on pupils' prior learning
- leaders identify promptly any pupils who are falling behind and take effective action to address any gaps in learning
- staff use pupils' assessment information more effectively so that tasks and lessons are matched to pupils' needs and abilities, taking account of pupils' starting points.

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

Yours sincerely

Francis Gonzalez
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors held meetings with you and other senior leaders. We held discussions with different leaders about safeguarding, the curriculum, attendance, behaviour, and the school's assessment information. Meetings were held with the chair of the governing body and two other governors, and with a representative from the local authority. Inspectors spoke to three parents on the telephone, and met with a group of pupils. We worked with senior leaders to scrutinise pupils' work and assessment information. We looked at a range of documentation, including the improvement plan, attendance data, records of pupils' progress and behaviour, and evidence of records to keep pupils safe. Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys, including six responses from parents and 19 staff responses.