

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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11 October 2018

Ms Jane Jones  
Headteacher  
The Shrubberies School  
Oldends Lane  
Stonehouse  
Gloucestershire  
GL10 2DG

Dear Ms Jones

### **Short inspection of The Shrubberies School**

Following my visit to the school on 2 October 2018 with Ofsted Inspector Jen Edwards, 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 good in March 2015.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The leadership team has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas that need further development. Leaders and governors know their pupils extremely well. They plan provision carefully so that it meets pupils' individual needs. For example, you have successfully tackled those areas identified at the last inspection as needing to improve, most notably improving the quality of teaching and learning, and increasing pupils' independence in their learning. Consequently, pupils make good progress.

As headteacher, you exhibit high expectations of yourself and expect others to do the same. You work seamlessly with your deputy headteacher and share the same vision and aspirations to provide pupils, all of whom have varied and complex needs, with the best learning experiences. Indeed, governors comment that, under your leadership, 'every child matters'.

You are well supported by governors who have a good understanding of the school. They are fully aware of the current development priorities and support your vision and the future direction you want the school to take. Governors provide you with a good balance of challenge and support. This is because you have an open and transparent relationship with the governing body.

You and your deputy headteacher are outward-looking. You research and consider approaches to the education of pupils who have complex needs with care. For example, you have driven forward improvements by visiting other schools and settings, locally and nationally.

Through accurate evaluation of the school's performance, you, your leaders and governors are aware of what needs to improve. For example, you have recognised that, while the school development plan accurately identifies what needs to improve, it does not articulate well enough how actions are going to improve pupils' outcomes. Nor does it outline when checks will be made and by whom. In addition, you acknowledge that leaders need to ensure that there is a consistent approach by staff to the school's communication strategies, for example in the use of sign language to enable pupils to have full access to their learning.

You and your staff have created a warm and happy school where pupils thrive. Most parents are highly supportive of the school. The dedication of your team was summed up eloquently in the following comments made by parents: 'The staff are highly professional and seem to genuinely love their jobs' and 'Staff go the extra mile for their pupils.'

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. These included: how the school makes sure that pupils are safe; the impact of leaders on ensuring that pupils receive an effective standard of education; how leaders have driven forward improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, especially in mathematics; and the effectiveness of the curriculum in ensuring that pupils are well prepared for their future in education, training or employment. These key lines of enquiry are considered below under 'safeguarding' and 'inspection findings'.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The care and safety of every pupil lie at the heart of all the school does. The nature of your school means that all pupils are vulnerable in a variety of ways. This means that safeguarding is integral to the work of your school and there is a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Governors have a robust approach to monitoring all aspects of safeguarding to ensure that it remains rigorous. For example, they carefully check the single central record to ensure that it is accurate and contains the information required. Undertaking such checks helps minimise risk to pupils.

There is a shared understanding of the need to protect each pupil from potential risk of harm. Staff, irrespective of their role, receive regular training that is of a high quality and keeps them well informed of the latest guidance. For example, staff have a good understanding of child sexual exploitation. This means that staff have the confidence to take swift action should they have any concerns about the safety of a pupil.

Leaders, including governors, fully understand the importance of recruiting staff safely. The checks undertaken are stringent. As a result, all staff are carefully vetted before they start employment to confirm that they are suitable to work with children.

The school works closely with other agencies and services to ensure the safety of pupils in their care. Leaders are knowledgeable and confident in the implementation of safeguarding procedures. Indeed, they do not hesitate to challenge other agencies and escalate concerns if they suspect that the care and safety of a pupil are at risk.

There are strong and positive relationships between staff and pupils. As a result, pupils explain how they are happy to come to school, commenting, 'If someone did something hurtful, I would tell someone and they would fix the problem.'

Most parents are confident about the safety of their children in school. Parents who responded to the Ofsted survey, or who spoke to inspectors, state that their child is happy at the school, and is safe and well looked after. 'This school does an excellent job supporting our children to learn and thrive as best they can' and 'So nice to have the confidence in the school to look after my child' are just two of the supportive statements made by parents.

### **Inspection findings**

- You are a strong leader. You are ambitious for the pupils to receive the best quality of education and care to enable them to make a positive contribution to society. You have a skilled and highly effective senior team. Consequently, the capacity of the school to drive forward improvements remains strong.
- You and your leaders have high expectations. You carefully monitor the quality of provision to ensure that teaching and learning are consistently strong. You provide effective guidance to staff and carefully plan their professional development. Nonetheless, you, along with your governors, do not hesitate in tackling underperformance if staff do not meet your high expectations. This means that, over time, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment continues to be good.
- You have successfully tackled the area identified at the last inspection about improving pupils' skills in mathematics across a range of subjects. For example, older pupils were proud of independently making sandwiches for snacks and showing their understanding of the importance of using equipment in the kitchen safely, such as knives. In addition, they were able to demonstrate their understanding of money. They were able to select from a menu and correctly identify how much each item cost, the coins needed to pay and the change they should receive. Such activities build pupils' confidence and provide them with essential skills for the future.
- All staff know the individual needs of pupils well and are acutely aware of their varied and complex needs. The curriculum covers a wide range of subjects and learning experiences with a strong focus on the core skills of reading, writing and mathematics, carefully linked to developing pupils' real-life skills.
- As leaders, you are fully aware of the need to refine the curriculum further due to the increase in the complexity of pupils' needs. When activities do not precisely meet the needs of the individual pupil, they do not make the best possible progress. Furthermore, you are working effectively to extend further the range of

qualifications offered to pupils, especially for the most able. You are rightly proud of the success of pupils in 2018 gaining entry-level qualifications for the first time and are determined to build on these early achievements. You have plans in place to tackle these identified areas of improvement.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- targets in the school development plan have precise success criteria which focus on pupils' outcomes and are frequently checked by school leaders and evaluated by the governing body for impact
- the school's curriculum is further refined to ensure that information kept by the school about pupils' progress informs teachers' planning of pupils' individual next steps so they make the best possible progress
- there is a consistent approach to the school's communication strategies to enable pupils to have full access to their learning
- leaders provide the opportunity to extend further the qualifications offered and gained, especially by the most able pupils, to enable them to reach their full potential.

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

Yours sincerely

Jen Southall  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors met with you and your deputy headteacher. Together, we talked about the improvements which have been made since the previous inspection. We observed the start of the day when pupils first arrive in school. On each of your two sites, we carried out 'learning walks' through classes, accompanied by yourself and the deputy headteacher. We also held discussions with two governors, heads of departments and staff. A phone call was held with an education adviser from Gloucestershire local authority. Inspectors spoke informally with pupils throughout the inspection.

A wide range of documentation was looked at, including the school's evaluation of its own performance and information relating to pupils' current achievement and progress. Inspectors also checked the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.

Inspectors spoke to parents during the day and took into account the 13 responses

to the online survey, 'Parent View'. They considered additional comments received from parents via the free-text message service.