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Mrs Kate Bargh
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Dear Mrs Bargh

Short inspection of Oakwood School

Following my visit to the school on 2 October 2018 with Russell Hinton, 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be outstanding.

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

Leadership at all levels remains a clear strength of the school. Following the recent federation, middle leaders have welcomed the opportunity to share excellent practice with other schools. They are inspired by your leadership and are quick to take any necessary action to drive forward school improvement. This ensures that the pupils at Oakwood have excellent provision of care and education. The high-quality staff training programme ensures that the dedicated staff are competent and confident.

Outstanding teaching allows pupils to make exceptional progress, not only in academic areas, but also in their personal and social development. Teachers ensure that lessons stimulate pupils' enjoyment and learning. A range of communication tools are used by all classroom-based staff and this ensures that all pupils are able to participate fully in lessons.

Relationships between adults and pupils are exceptionally warm and supportive, and staff provide a high level of care and compassion. Staff share knowledge and understanding of pupils' needs well.

Pupils' behaviour around school is exemplary. During our observations and discussions with pupils they demonstrated friendliness and confidence. However,

some staff lack the confidence to fully implement the school's behaviour policy to support pupils in self-regulating their own behaviours.

Pupils clearly enjoy attending school and shared their enjoyment with the inspection team. The reward system that you have introduced for attendance has had a positive and significant impact. Classes compete to have 'Ted Bear' in their classrooms and show great delight in choosing his outfits. Pupils show respect and tolerance to each other and feel a deep sense of pride in their school.

Parents are extremely supportive of school leaders and staff. Almost all parents who shared their views with inspectors were complimentary about the quality of education and care that their children receive, with more than one parent informing inspectors that 'the school feels like a family'. Parents feel assured that their children are safe and well cared for.

Safeguarding is effective.

A strong safeguarding culture is evident at Oakwood School. You and the leadership team have made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and take account of the needs of the pupils in the school. Protecting pupils and keeping them safe is a key priority for everyone.

The school nursing team support pupils' medical needs well. Appropriate procedures ensure that staff register all of their concerns, however minor, and senior leaders follow these up immediately. Clear protocols are in place for dealing with absences and pupils missing from school.

Safeguarding training is regularly provided for all staff so they know what to do and who to contact when they have any concerns about pupils. Throughout the school, pupils are taught about the potential risks and dangers they might face as they grow up.

Logs of behaviour incidents and analysis of pupils' behaviour show that the use of restrictive physical interventions has significantly reduced due to the work of the behaviour support team with pupils, their families and school staff.

Inspection findings

- All pupils make strong progress from their starting points. The senior leadership team carefully check pupils' progress and assessment data is used to inform planning for intervention strategies.
- Leaders have ensured that teaching is constantly enhanced so that it remains of the highest quality. Transitions between activities are smooth and pupils quickly embrace new routines. The high staff-to-pupil ratio ensures that pupils have reliable and effective support, which enables them to make strong progress.
- Children in the early years are provided with a range of activities to choose from. Although children demonstrate a high level of interest, opportunities for them to

develop their independence are limited.

- Staff have high expectations and pupils are highly motivated in lessons. Aply supported by experienced and knowledgeable support staff, teachers successfully use a range of sensory and academic stimuli. When pupils' interest wanes, staff are quick to notice and re-engage pupils in their learning effectively.
- Leaders make exceptional use of pupil premium funding to provide a range of resources and opportunities to improve pupils' communication skills. The additional speech and language support strongly develops the different ways in which pupils are able to communicate. The enhanced training for school staff provides them with the confidence and skills to interact with all pupils.
- Lessons, displays and extra-curricular activities promote British values well. The school council values its ability to be involved in decision-making and its members are proud to have been able to choose the display in the school hall.
- Leaders create a range of opportunities for pupils to develop social skills and independence. The ambience and atmosphere of the breakfast room provides a very positive start to the school day.
- School leaders utilise the limited space within the current school premises well. They have taken every opportunity to turn corridors and offices into useful learning spaces for the pupils. Despite the lack of physical space, pupils' social interaction is strong because it is promoted well by staff. Leaders are driving forward with plans to extend the premises.
- The personal, social and health education programme contributes to the positive ethos in the school. Pupils respond well to these lessons. They enjoy helping each other to learn and show a mutual understanding of the various needs within their peer groups. Teachers use a range of effective questions to ensure that all pupils, irrespective of their communication levels, are able to say or show what they have learned.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the curriculum in early years provides opportunities for children to develop their independence
- training is provided to improve the confidence of all staff in implementing the school's behaviour strategies.

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

Yours sincerely

Kim Ellis
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and senior leaders to discuss progress since the last inspection, the school's self-evaluation and the key lines of enquiry for this inspection. We agreed a plan for the day.

My colleague and I spoke to several members of staff about the curriculum, assessment, behaviour, pupils' welfare and attendance. I spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body, and the designated lead for safeguarding. I observed learning in parts of lessons with you. My colleague and I also met with pupils and observed behaviour at lunchtime.

We looked at samples of pupils' work from both key stages. We reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plan, the local authority's recorded visits, minutes from governing body meetings, and records relating to safeguarding. We considered the 14 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and considered the views of the 21 staff who completed Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.