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Mrs Julia James
Principal
Bedelsford School
Grange Road
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Dear Mrs James

Short inspection of Bedelsford School

Following my visit to the school on 11 December 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 your predecessor school was judged to be outstanding in March 2016.

This school continues to be outstanding.

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

You and your team have extremely high aspirations for your pupils and you lead a truly inspirational school. On the day of the inspection, we visited classes across the age range, accompanied by you and your vice-principal, and saw that teaching and learning are consistently strong throughout the school. Maximum use is made of learning time and not a moment is lost. You have high expectations of all members of the school community, with no room for complacency. The idea of 'better never stops' is at the centre of what you achieve at the school.

The school caters for pupils with physical difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties and complex health needs. The numbers on the roll have increased substantially in recent years, and the needs of the pupils are becoming more complex.

On the day of the inspection, pupils were visibly happy and enjoying their learning. They told inspectors that they learned lots at school and liked taking part in the many activities on offer, including trips. Pupils also said that the school helps them to work towards their ambitions and prepares them well for becoming adults.

The parents and carers that inspectors spoke to were very happy with the school and said that you listen to any concerns they may have. They said their children

love school and are kept busy. Parents are pleased that their children are given opportunities to take part in activities that their mainstream peers would participate in, such as cooking and performances. They value the strong communication between home and school and say they are well informed about their child's school day.

Staff know the pupils' needs exceptionally well and say they enjoy working at the school. They are very dedicated to their work. During the inspection, some staff raised concerns around the increase in the number of pupils now on the roll, pupils' range of needs and the impact this has had on the school. In addition, some members of staff have found the period of change difficult to manage, despite your efforts to support their well-being.

The governing body members know the school well. They are very committed and supportive of the school. Governors told inspectors that they are proud of the school. The link adviser from the local authority and the deputy chief executive officer of the academy trust also know the school and its many strengths extremely well.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. This was evident on the day of the inspection. All staff have relevant and up-to-date training, including on the 'Prevent' duty. They know the correct procedure to follow if they have a concern about a child. Staff are acutely aware of the very vulnerable nature of your pupils and the extra attention required to keep them safe.

Parents told inspectors that you and your team keep their children very safe. Pupils say that they feel safe in the school and that the staff keep them safe. Pupils are supported in developing communication skills to express any concerns they may have. Medical needs affect the attendance of some pupils. However, you and your staff do all that you can to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. Attendance is meticulously monitored and checked. You have worked hard with families in improving individual pupils' attendance.

All records are well kept and of high quality. All staff have the required pre-employment checks. Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are up to date and meet requirements.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed on some key lines of enquiry. First, we decided to look at what leaders have done to develop the sixth-form provision. We saw sixth-form classes engaged in a range of purposeful activities on the day of the inspection. These included identifying their own characteristics and personalities, being able to describe themselves with enthusiasm and answering questions about the news. Staff had high expectations and were both challenging and supporting students to interact and communicate with them.

- Students in the sixth form are prepared well for life after school. They participate in frequent visits within the local community and these include to leisure centres, restaurants, the theatre, the Police station, train stations, dentists and health centres. Students attend a college link course and are supported to visit their next provision to ensure an effective transition.
- Students have the opportunity to study for accredited courses and are supported to make appropriate choices related to this. Careers education is carefully matched to individual student needs. The careers programme includes functional skills and enterprise. The 'tea in the trees' café is one work-related initiative where students provide refreshments for visitors during school events.
- We were interested to see how the curriculum prepares the pupils for the next stage in their education and adulthood. The personalised and very well-thought-out curriculum is underpinned by the key areas of social and emotional, thinking, independence, communication and mobility skills. Depending on the needs of individual pupils, they are taught through a sensory, semi-formal or formal curriculum model approach. Pupils' work in folders demonstrates that they are making strong progress and being well prepared for the next steps in their education.
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of additional curriculum activities, such as 'Bedelsford's got talent' where individual pupils are invited to perform. They participate in a variety of workshops and outdoor learning opportunities. These allow pupils to develop their confidence and independence. Pupils also have the chance to go on school journeys. The rich and varied curriculum experiences on offer prepare pupils extremely well for living meaningful and as independent as possible lives in adulthood.
- Finally, we were interested to see how leaders have developed communication for pupils within the school, so they can access the curriculum and make the best possible progress.
- During the inspection, we saw a wide variety of communication strategies being used that were appropriate to individual pupils' needs. The range of strategies included the use of specialised technology, signing and symbols.
- High expectations were placed on pupils to use their means of communication, with adults providing just the right amount of support and challenge. In many cases, pupils used communication aids independently. The expectation that pupils would communicate and interact as independently as possible was consistent across the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- an appropriate programme of staff training is put in place to ensure the outstanding quality of education is maintained as the school undergoes any further development.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive

officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Kingston upon Thames. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Tarrant
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspection team met with you, the vice-principal and assistant headteachers, the executive headteacher, who is also the deputy chief executive officer of the academy trust, the lead teacher for the sixth form, teachers and teaching assistants. They met with the school business manager to review the school's single central record. They met with a group of parents and members of the local governing body including the chair and vice-chair. They held a telephone interview with the link adviser from the local authority. Inspectors visited classes accompanied by yourself and your deputy to gather a range of evidence relating to teaching, learning and assessment. They met with pupils to talk about their experience of school and aspects of safeguarding. Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, and assessment and progress records. There were 47 responses to the staff questionnaire, no responses to the pupil questionnaire and five Parent View free-text responses.