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11 February 2019

Mr Richard Boyle  
Principal  
Muntham House School  
Barns Green  
Horsham  
West Sussex  
RH13 0NJ

Dear Mr Boyle,

### **Short inspection of Muntham House School**

Following my visit to the school on 31 January 2019 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 the school was judged to be good in January 2015.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, along with other leaders and governors, are passionate in ensuring that all pupils achieve their full potential. You balance your focus skilfully between pupils' personal and academic development. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Staff model the behaviours and social skills that they wish pupils to emulate. As one parent said, 'My son used to have celebrities as role models and now he has his teachers.'

Your school is outward looking. You host regional conferences with other special schools and alternative providers to share best practice. You hold symposiums on a range of issues, such as the emotional needs of pupils. Parents and carers are delighted with the school. They say that their children are happy, and nearly all would recommend the school to other parents. A typical comment from a parent, who responded using free text, was: 'The staff at Muntham House go above and beyond to support the boys. They help them to achieve to the best of their ability and keep them safe and well supported.'

You are involved in a global curriculum initiative with some other West Sussex schools. You host staff from many different international schools and share ideas. Some pupils from your school have been lucky enough to visit these schools and experience different cultures. Recently your pupils have helped to paint the classrooms of a school in Uganda. Work such as this has a positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Prior to joining Muntham House, many pupils have had years of negative experience of school. Some may well have been out of education for more than a year. Pupils told inspectors that, when they first start at your school, they go through a programme called 'Ready to Learn'. This programme helps them to develop positive strategies to overcome the frustrations that they may feel in the classroom. It gives pupils the opportunity to start again and realise the benefits of learning.

At the time of the last inspection, the arrangements for checking pupils' attendance while on work experience or at college was an area to improve. You have addressed this effectively. When necessary, staff go to pupils' homes to make sure that their attendance is the best it can be. Another area to improve, identified at the last inspection, was the measurement of the outcomes for different groups of pupils, as well as individuals. This is to ensure that all groups of pupils make the best possible progress. As a school, you investigated this area thoroughly. You identified that, due to pupils arriving and leaving at different times, the tracking of progress for different groups of pupils needed a skilful approach. You have now introduced a precise system of assessment that staff are increasingly using to good effect.

When pupils first arrive at your school, a baseline assessment is made of their needs. Gaps in their learning are identified quickly. Work is usually well planned to address these gaps. As a result, pupils make good progress from their starting points in a range of subjects. However, in mathematics in key stage 2, work is not always challenging enough to enable the most able pupils to make strong progress.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Pupils' well-being is a priority at your school. Staff and governors work together closely to ensure that pupils feel safe and well cared for. You ask pupils for their views regularly, including on how safe they feel. Surveys show that pupils feel very positive.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Policies are thorough and provide clear guidance on the procedures to follow, should staff have any concerns. Staff and governors keep up to date with regular training. They are always vigilant to ensure that pupils are protected.

Leaders manage the recruitment of staff very carefully. The single central record of the recruitment checks on all who work at the school is well maintained.

Pupils report that, although bullying happens occasionally, staff act quickly to stop it. The use of physical restraint in the school is rare. This contributes to the school's harmonious atmosphere and ethos of care.

Pupils learn to keep safe, such as when using the internet. They know about the potential dangers of social media. Pupils know how to keep safe in different situations, including when taking part in activities off site. Some of your pupils have undertaken specialist training. For example, some took part in a programme where they learned about different firefighting techniques.

## Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we looked at the impact of leaders on improving the school. You have established a form of distributed leadership and this has had a positive impact on many aspects of provision. Your staff are well qualified. Senior and middle leaders are keen to improve their skills still further. They have completed qualifications in school leadership and Master's degrees in education.
- Governors support the school well. They are passionate about ensuring that pupils receive a high standard of education. Pupils know the school's governors well. This is because they visit lessons regularly and talk to pupils about the work they are doing.
- We checked how well pupils progress at your school. We found that pupils make strong progress in their personal development. You use the 'Muntham Wheel' to show the strengths of pupils' emotional and social skills development. As one parent said: 'My son is a changed boy since joining Muntham House and the support he has received has been profoundly appreciated.' Therapists, such as speech and language therapists, play an important role in developing pupils' skills.
- Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make good academic progress from their starting points. They develop strong skills in subjects such as English and mathematics, as well as in a range of other subjects. Pupils achieve well and gain a range of academic and vocational qualifications, up to Level 2. All who took a GCSE last year achieved a pass.
- We examined the impact of the curriculum on improving pupils' progress. We found that the school offers an engaging and stimulating curriculum. Pupils enjoy a wide range of subjects, such as sport, media, information technology and music. Pupils enjoy going on visits, including to local and national theatre productions. You are always working hard to make sure that pupils are really well prepared for the future. You now have plans to provide more careers advice and guidance for pupils, from Year 8 onwards.
- The final area we looked at was the provision for post-16 students. We found that these students gain a range of vocational and academic qualifications, based on their individual interests. For students interested in construction, for example, you have developed good links with a national housebuilder. Such experiences enable students to gain first-hand knowledge of a range of jobs. Students take part in several enterprise projects. For instance, some have been paid to decorate some rooms in the school. This is developing students' business and financial skills. On the day of the inspection, some students were visiting the bank to deposit the money they had earned. Students develop good independent living skills. This is illustrated by students learning to cook a range of useful recipes in the fully equipped kitchen. There are also opportunities for all 17-year-olds to learn to drive.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they implement plans to provide more careers advice and guidance for pupils from Year 8
- there is more challenge in mathematics to enable the most able pupils in key stage 2 to make stronger progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Liz Bowes  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, members of your senior leadership team and the chair of governors. Discussions were held with a group of pupils and one response to the Ofsted questionnaire for pupils was also considered. Inspectors, with members of the senior leadership team, visited all the classes and looked at pupils' books and portfolios.

We took into consideration 23 responses to the Ofsted online survey Parent View and 13 free-text comments. A range of the school's documentation was looked at, including: leaders' evaluation of the school's performance and plans for improvement; assessment, behaviour and exclusions information; the single central record of pre-employment checks; policies and procedures; and minutes of the governing body's meetings.