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Remo Palladino  
Executive Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Palladino

### **Short inspection of The Lindfield School**

Following my visit to the school on 12 March 2019 with Anne Allen, 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 December 2015.

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

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your inspirational leadership has created a culture of continuing excellence. You, senior leaders and staff share the values and vision of the school and are passionate about enabling every pupil to achieve the best possible outcomes. As a result, pupils thrive in this school, and, last year, all leavers gained appropriate places on college courses.

Staff take the time to get to know the pupils, ensuring that relationships between staff and pupils are exceptionally positive. Teachers set challenging targets, and, as a result, the vast majority of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make outstanding progress from their starting points, in both their academic and their personal development. On the afternoon of the inspection, parents and carers visited the school to discuss their child's progress with the teachers. Parents who spoke to inspectors were extremely supportive of school leaders and staff. All parents who completed the Ofsted online survey Parent View believe that the school keeps pupils safe. One parent said, 'It's a fantastic school with the children at the heart of everything they do.' Pupils told inspectors that they are happy at school. Pupils particularly appreciate the ways that staff help them to develop their aspirations and teach them vital skills such as travel training. These skills enable them to develop independence for the future. You and school leaders are planning to increase the range of accredited courses and vocational opportunities for pupils in key stage 4.

Since the last inspection, the Southfield multi-academy trust (MAT) was established and you became the chief executive officer. The Lindfield School is part of the Southfield MAT and the MAT trustees provide governance to the school. Members of the governing body share your high ambitions for the school. Governors have a wide range of skills which enable them to provide an effective balance of support and challenge to leaders. The governors know the school well and are very clear about the school's strengths and next steps for development. Governors recognise the very positive impact of your inspiring leadership, not just for The Lindfield School, but also in your role as executive headteacher of all schools in the MAT.

At the last inspection of the predecessor school, inspectors highlighted the school's many strengths. They also recommended that the new assessment system introduced by leaders was embedded so that it is fully linked to the learning pathways for pupils. Leaders have not only achieved this, but they have also developed an online assessment system that parents can access from home. The system meticulously records pupils' attainment in all subjects and it has the added advantage that staff can upload photographic, video or written evidence to support their assessment of pupils' progress. Parents are informed when new data relating to their child is added to the online system. This enables parents to see their child's progress clearly and where improvements need to be made. As a result, parents and staff are able to work in a strong partnership to support pupils' academic, social and communication development.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a very strong culture of safeguarding within the school. Robust recruitment and background checks are carried out to ensure that all adults are suitable to work with pupils. Training is thorough and up to date. Staff have a clear understanding of current legislation, guidance and their responsibilities. This ensures that staff are proactive in dealing with any safeguarding concerns. The school uses an online safeguarding recording system, to which all staff have carefully managed access. The system alerts leaders to all concerns that staff raise regarding individual pupils, and leaders ensure that appropriate action is taken. Excellent staff communication and sharing of important information about pupils' needs ensure that pupils are safe in the school. The school has strong relationships with parents and outside agencies, working cooperatively with them to support pupils.

Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy coming to the school, that they feel safe in the school and know who to speak to if they have concerns. Teachers in 'LIFE' lessons, personal, social and health education and other subjects teach pupils successfully how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. Parents also expressed confidence in the school's safeguarding practice and appreciate the commitment of staff. One parent said:

'My son's attitude to school and to learning has been totally transformed since attending this school. Having been a school refuser and very unhappy at his mainstream primary school, he has flourished and looks forward to going to school every day.'

## Inspection findings

- As executive headteacher of the schools in the Southfield MAT, you ensure that all school leaders collaborate effectively within the MAT. The Lindfield School benefits from being in the MAT, because of the large number of resources and opportunities the MAT offers, such as: expertise; staff development and training; smooth transition of pupils within MAT schools; and a range of trust roles to support administration and facilities, including the trust student welfare and safeguarding manager. It is clear that your school has benefited from being part of this supportive network.
- Pupils often arrive at the school with limited information about their academic ability. As a result, the school spends the first term assessing pupils to establish a secure baseline from which future progress can be measured. Pupils are placed on one of three academic pathways and are set challenging targets, which are reviewed regularly. Where pupils are not making expected progress, bespoke interventions are put in place. The school's most recent assessment-tracking information shows that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make very strong progress.
- The curriculum in key stage 3 is broad and balanced. Pupils in key stage 4 follow accredited courses and a personalised curriculum that is designed to provide the qualifications and skills that they need for their future. Strong teaching encourages pupils to learn much-needed independent life skills. All pupils benefit from work experience which is tailored to meet their individual needs and aspirations. Strong links with colleges and work on transition in Years 10 and 11 ensure that all pupils progress confidently to the next stage of their education. Leaders now want to provide more subject choices and vocational experiences to give pupils more opportunities to choose internships and apprenticeships as well as college places when they leave the school.
- Rigorous and well-established procedures for recording behavioural incidents are analysed to support and improve behaviour. Comprehensive behaviour management training enables all staff to deal with incidents very effectively. Staff know the individual triggers that can affect each pupil's behaviour. They employ strategies effectively to ensure that any incident is dealt with calmly and swiftly. As a result, there have been no fixed-term exclusions this year, and incidents of poor behaviour are minimal. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is exceptional. They understand what is required and, when they need to, pupils can use the approaches that they have been taught to regulate their own behaviour. Communication with parents is highly effective, and parents are encouraged to adopt the same consistent approach at home.
- Leaders' proactive work with parents and outside agencies has ensured that pupils attend school regularly. Many pupils who join the school had poor attendance in their previous school. However, once they become a pupil at the school, their attendance improves dramatically.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to develop the curriculum at key stage 4 by offering pupils even wider choices, that include vocational subjects.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for East Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Susan Conway  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, my colleague and I met with you, the head of school, the school's leadership team, and the chair, vice-chair and a trustee of the board of trustees for the MAT. I also spoke on the telephone to your school-improvement adviser and an educational consultant. We visited classes in all the key stages to observe pupils' learning, talk with pupils about their progress, and look at their books. All observations of lessons were conducted jointly with members of the leadership team. We spoke to members of the school council and talked to a small number of parents. We looked at the 18 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire Parent View, including nine free-text comments. We looked at a range of documentation, including information about the work of governors, safeguarding, the curriculum and assessment. We examined the school's analysis of pupils' progress and attainment, leaders' self-evaluation and their plans for improvement.