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24 September 2018

Ms Helen Andrioli
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Andrioli

Short inspection of Westcroft School

Following my visit to the school on 11 September 2018 with Derek Barnes, 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 good in February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since the school became an academy, there has been a change in the nature of pupils' special educational needs. Most pupils now in the school have severe and complex special educational needs, whereas in the past the majority have had moderate learning difficulties.

You and your leadership team have responded to this change appropriately by developing a new curriculum. This curriculum meets pupils' needs well because it focuses on what pupils need to know for life after school. Staff have a continuous focus on pupils' independence and personal skills in lessons, at playtimes and throughout all school activities. This ongoing focus is helping to promote pupils' personal skills, for example promoting personal hygiene, positive relationships with others, good communication skills and physical health.

Alongside the new curriculum, you have designed a new system to assess pupils' progress from Year 1 to Year 13. This assessment system allows leaders to monitor pupils' progress in detail. However, leaders acknowledge that tweaks to this system are likely to be needed as all staff become accustomed to it.

You have ensured that the school is a safe, happy place where pupils make good progress. Almost all pupils who leave the school at the end of Year 11 or Year 13 go on to sustained destinations because they are well prepared for work, further education or training. Staff work in partnership with parents and carers, which means that parents feel involved in planning for their child's education.

There are some aspects of leaders' strategic planning and governance that need to be improved, for example, the rigour of checks made by governors on the way additional funding is spent.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have appointed four designated safeguarding leaders, so there is always someone available to deal with any potential issues. Staff log their concerns in detail so that pupils' emerging welfare needs are addressed swiftly and any patterns in concerns are identified.

The executive headteacher is a specialist in safeguarding. As a result of her support, all leaders have a sharp understanding of current, local risks and how they affect pupils in the school. Staff are well trained to spot any signs that pupils might need extra support. There is a strong culture of vigilance and information sharing across the school.

Inspection findings

- As a result of changes to the curriculum, teaching and assessment, made in response to pupils' changing needs, pupils make good progress. Across all year groups, pupils are making progress towards their targets. At the end of key stage 4 and key stage 5, almost all pupils go on to appropriate destinations. They also achieve a range of useful accreditations in personal skills, communication, horticulture and animal management, for example.
- In lessons, relationships between staff and pupils are warm, caring and positive. Teachers clearly know pupils well and match tasks to their individual needs. Teachers also work closely with teaching assistants, and together they ensure that all pupils take part in learning activities at their own level.
- Leaders use a range of methods to improve attendance, including home visits, strict guidelines on medical appointments and early intervention when attendance dips. This has led to improved rates of attendance and a reduction in persistent absence over the last year.
- Leaders make sure that teachers focus on meeting disadvantaged pupils' learning needs and this group of pupils are making steady progress towards their targets. However, leaders' assessment of the barriers facing disadvantaged pupils is not well enough developed and their evaluation of the impact of this funding lacks detail. As a consequence, governors cannot hold leaders to account as effectively as they might.

- Some funds from the physical education (PE) and sport premium have been used in ways that do not meet the requirements of this funding. They have not been spent on activities that create sustainable improvements to PE and sports provision for pupils.
- Parents are very clear that they value the work of the school highly. For example, one parent told inspectors, 'This school has changed my child's life ... it has changed mine too.' Another parent commented, 'My child has blossomed since attending Westcroft.' These comments are representative of many other comments that parents made to inspectors.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the system to monitor pupils' progress is consistently reviewed and adapted as it becomes embedded across the school
- planning for, and evaluation of the spending of pupil premium funding is sharpened so that governors can better hold leaders to account
- all spending of PE and sport premium funding is checked to make sure that it has sufficient focus on supporting sustainable impact.

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 Wolverhampton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dan Owen

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the headteacher and other senior staff. They also held meetings with governors, representatives from the trust and the chief executive officer. They scrutinised the single central record and other aspects of safeguarding. The views of parents were evaluated through the six responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and through conversations with parents as they brought their children to school. A range of lessons were observed and pupils' work scrutinised, and inspectors spoke to pupils about their experiences of school.