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Mrs Jackie Sumner
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Sumner

Short inspection of Rachel Madocks School

Following my visit to the school on 7 November 2017 with Simon Yates, 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 June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your senior leaders are dedicated to the pupils, their families and the staff. You are well supported by some strong middle leaders who are ambitious for the school. Together you have maintained the strengths in the school and are successfully driving further improvements. Systems for monitoring teaching, learning and assessment are in place. There is evidence of good work around improving attendance, but you have yet to systematically evaluate the success of the interventions that you have put in place.

Parents are, rightly, overwhelmingly positive about the school. A large number of parents were keen to tell inspectors how their children have benefited from coming to the school. Parents are delighted with the difference that the school makes for their children. Many parents said that the school has improved how their child behaves. Families are fully involved in the education of their children, and parents rightly value the high level of care that their children receive. This is because staff are highly trained and know the children very well. Working closely with families is a strong aspect of the school. There were a good number of responses in Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, that indicated how well parents feel that their children are educated and cared for.

Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are a very strong feature of this school's success. This was evidenced by pupils' behaviour in class and at break

and lunchtimes. All staff work tirelessly to support pupils in their behaviour and development. Pupils are very willing to participate in activities and are invariably polite and engaging.

You, together with other leaders, have taken effective action to maintain and build on the strengths identified in the previous inspection. You have successfully addressed the recommendation to improve the quality of teaching. You have also increased the range of courses available, and pupils now achieve qualifications in a number of areas such as functional skills in numeracy and literacy.

Pupils enjoy school and told inspectors that they 'like their lessons and have good teachers'. They feel safe and know whom to talk to if they are feeling worried. Pupils like their lessons and enjoy the range of activities they participate in. A good example of this is the pupils' enthusiasm for their residential trips. They particularly enjoy planning what to eat and who will cook and wash up.

Older pupils have suitable opportunities for work experience and reported that 'work experience has been good'. They enjoyed participating in events such as the 'Special Olympics', which included a trip to London, and preparing for and participating in a music event called 'Rock Challenge'. Such opportunities help to provide pupils with the skills they will need for their future.

You have begun to measure the progress that pupils have made towards achieving the outcomes of their education, health and care plans. Assessment of learning in these areas is developing, and in the best examples is showing strong links to wider outcomes and aspirations. The collection of this evidence is not yet consistent across the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

A strong safeguarding culture permeates through the school. Staff are suitably trained and thoroughly know and fulfil their responsibilities. Staff are passionate about keeping pupils safe, and rigorous systems are in place for staff to pass on any concerns. Appropriate and timely checks on new staff are made, and all references are followed up.

Attendance is monitored regularly. A variety of interventions are successfully used to decrease the levels of absence. Despite this work, some pupils still miss too much school. Senior leaders are redoubling their efforts to reduce these absences. Governors are beginning to take a firmer line with some parents over this.

Inspection findings

- During this short inspection we agreed to focus on the following areas:
 - the effectiveness of safeguarding
 - how effectively leaders have continued to improve teaching since the last inspection

- whether leaders have increased the range of courses available for pupils and what difference this has made
- how well funding for disadvantaged pupils is used.
- Leaders have continued to build on the effective teaching, learning and assessment found at the last inspection. Leaders and teachers use innovative methods to review and improve their practice. Leaders report that this has led to some improvements in teaching. They acknowledge that it took some time for the chosen approaches to be utilised by all teachers and that the initiative is not fully embedded yet.
- In virtually all classrooms visited by inspectors, teachers were directing learning support assistants well in order for them to support pupil learning. This means that all staff have a positive impact on improving pupil learning. We saw a typical example in one mathematics lesson, where a learning support assistant was finding different ways of challenging pupils to ensure that the learning was consolidated.
- A range of accredited courses are in place and the number of pupils achieving accreditations has increased year on year. Post-16 courses in mathematics and English are now accessed by more pupils. Pupils experience a great deal of success in these courses and the school is rightly proud of their achievements. Now that these courses are fully established, information about pupils' progress could be used even more precisely in order to set further challenging targets. The school has introduced the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and eight pupils have already achieved a bronze award.
- Leaders rightly value how work experience enhances pupils' development. A varied range of work-experience opportunities are offered, and leaders have ensured that this is as broad as possible to take into account pupils' interests. This means that pupils enjoy the experiences and develop the skills they need for their future.
- A thorough review of the pupil premium strategy last year has been completed, showing the positive difference made by the spending of these additional funds. In the past, however, comprehensive plans have not been put in place quickly enough to support more pupils to achieve aspirational outcomes.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a more strategic and consistent approach to the collection and use of information about pupils' progress is developed across the school in order to help leaders drive further improvements
- attendance improves by leaders monitoring and evaluating the impact of interventions designed to reduce absence, and taking appropriate remedial action.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Edwards
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors held meetings with you, other leaders and three governors. An inspector also held a telephone conversation with your school improvement advisor. Inspectors made short visits to 10 classrooms with senior leaders, and looked at pupils' files and books. We talked to pupils informally and formally, and spoke with parents when they arrived at the school at the beginning of the day. Inspectors considered 30 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also considered 14 responses to the staff survey. Various school documents were scrutinised, including safeguarding records, the school's self-evaluation plan and development plan, assessment information about pupils' progress, and information about behaviour, attendance and safety. Inspectors also looked at minutes of the meetings of the governing body, and information published on the school's website.