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Mr Andy Balmer
Executive Headteacher
College Park School
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Dear Mr Balmer

Short inspection of College Park School

Following my visit to the school on 3 May 2017 with Mark Dale-Emberton, 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 October 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 your appointment in September 2016 as executive headteacher, you have implemented a number of changes that are already having a significant impact on pupils' progress. You have recruited strong senior leaders, including a head of school, who share your passion and drive to secure a consistently high standard of education for the young people in your care. You have accurately evaluated the strengths of the school, but rightly acknowledge that further work is needed to ensure outstanding progress for all pupils. In particular, you have prioritised improving the assessment system so that staff have an accurate understanding of pupils' starting points and then create valuable learning opportunities. You accept that information on pupils' progress is sometimes not as accurate as it could be or analysed rigorously enough. You are currently reviewing leaders' roles and responsibilities to ensure that there is the capacity to make these further improvements and ensure that leaders have a strategic overview of pupils' performance.

The previous leadership team began to address the areas for development identified during the last inspection. Staff plan activities that encourage pupils to be active and independent in their learning. Visual displays in classrooms help pupils to plan their day, follow instructions or undertake a task independently. Opportunities to experience life in the wider community are plentiful.

Pupils visit local shops to practise their life skills and go cycling in the park, and benefit from a number of work-experience opportunities.

You have established a nurturing and safe environment. You and your staff know every pupil and their family well and work closely with external agencies to ensure that their needs are met. While some pupils who have very complex needs struggle at times to regulate their own behaviour, your staff's consistent and calm approach ensures that any incidents are quickly de-escalated. Pupils enjoy coming to school and trust the adults caring for them. Each group of pupils has a stable team of adults working with them. This ensures that individual pupils' particular needs, specific interests and concerns are known and catered for. Adults routinely use Makaton signing and picture exchange communication (PEC) to ensure that those who have speech and language difficulties can express their needs and desires. The school, though compact in size, is well organised, has break-out rooms for respite and is bright and well resourced.

Governors are experienced and robust in their questioning of school leaders. They know that more needs to be done to ensure the accuracy and effectiveness of current assessment systems and are fully supportive of current changes. They accept that their scrutiny of how funding, such as pupil premium, is spent could be more tightly focused on pupils' progress. They share the executive headteacher's vision for the high quality of education they want to provide across both schools in the federation. They are supportive of the impending leadership restructure, which will align roles and responsibilities across both schools and increase leadership capacity.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your leaders, governors and staff are highly vigilant in keeping pupils safe and understand their statutory responsibility to do so. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. You check carefully on staff's suitability to work at the school and keep comprehensive records. All pupils have a statement of educational needs or an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Many have complex needs, which require a range of wrap-around care from external agencies. You hold fortnightly meetings to discuss in detail pupils causing concern, evaluate the impact of your actions and keep meticulous records. You know every child well and their individual, specific needs. Consequently, all pupils have access to the highest standard of care and support, both internally and externally.

All staff, including governors, are well trained, including in how to keep children safe in education and how to identify signs of radicalisation and extremism through the 'Prevent' duty. Staff are clear that pupils are potentially vulnerable to issues in the community such as cyber bullying, female genital mutilation, grooming and gangs. As a result, opportunities to explore these issues and practise keeping themselves safe are mapped into the curriculum.

Parents work closely and positively with school staff to ensure that their children receive the best possible support. As one parent told inspectors about their son, 'Since attending College Park, he has come on in leaps and bounds in his day-to-day school work and social skills. He is a changed child and I cannot thank the school enough.' Pupils have excellent relationships with staff and know whom to confide in should they have any concerns. They told inspectors that they felt that their concerns would be listened to and dealt with quickly. As one pupil said, 'I look up to the teachers and would like to be like them.'

Inspection findings

- The curriculum is taught through themes and is designed to unify the school and create meaningful opportunities for pupils of all ages and abilities to learn together. For instance, a science week recently involved visiting speakers, trips to the museum and an inflatable planetarium in school. Teachers plan activities together, sharing best practice and resources to engage pupils in their learning. However, leaders acknowledge that at times, activities are more about managing behaviour rather than directly focused on pupils' academic progress.
- Leaders arrange pupil groups by ability and specific learning needs. Consequently, while there is a distinction between the primary, secondary and post-16 areas of the school, pupils of different ages mix well together. At significant transition points, pupils across a key stage are grouped together so that younger pupils can begin to gain the necessary skills to progress. For instance, Year 6 pupils are taught with those in Year 7, to ease their transition into secondary education.
- The school site has limited outdoor space, which proves challenging at times. However, leaders and staff work hard to ensure that creative opportunities are numerous. Arts and physical education in particular are strengths of the school. Specialist teachers in art, dance, drama and music provide engaging and meaningful opportunities for pupils. This supports pupils' spatial and physical awareness, social interaction and coordination in a fun and meaningful way.
- Strong links with local colleges ensure that the majority of pupils progress seamlessly to the next stage of their education or training. Post-16 students benefit from appropriate work-experience placements and visits to colleges. A range of accredited courses means that the majority leave with qualifications appropriate to their ability. Independent skills are taught in the school's on-site apartment, which students appear to value highly.
- Leaders track pupils' progress methodically. However, the use of different assessment systems over the last few years has resulted in baseline assessments that are either not accurate or not compatible. There are limited opportunities for teachers to check the accuracy of their ongoing assessments with other teachers at the school or across the local authority. Consequently, the quality of assessment information is not always precise or accurate and does not enable teachers to plan activities that will stretch and challenge all pupils. Parents and carers receive detailed termly reports on their child's progress, but more regular feedback is more ad hoc and less effective.

- Equally, while all staff have an accurate understanding of each pupil's context and specific educational needs, leaders do not have a strategic overview of pupils' performance. As a result, while they regularly monitor the effectiveness of teaching, this is not routinely linked to the performance of particular groups of pupils. For instance, while pupil premium funding is spent on enhancing pupils' wider opportunities and curriculum experiences, not enough focus is given to the impact of this on specific pupils' progress. Governors and leaders accept that their evaluation of how they spend this funding could be tightened.
- Staff are encouraged to visit external providers to improve their practice, and many value these experiences. Leaders acknowledge that further external expertise in some areas would be beneficial.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the imminent restructure of the leadership team strengthens the culture of strategic leadership so that leaders at all levels are clear about what they need to do to drive further improvement
- teachers make precise and accurate assessments of pupils' ability on entry to the school and their ongoing learning, so that they can plan activities that consistently challenge them to make good or better 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 Westminster. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Helen Matthews

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, the head of school, other senior leaders and teachers. They met with the chair of the governing body and three other governors. They also met with an adviser from the local authority to discuss the support offered to the school. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, curriculum information, referrals to external agencies and the register of checks made on staff. Inspectors visited lessons across the key stages jointly with school leaders to gather evidence on particular strands of teaching, learning and assessment. They spoke to pupils and staff informally and heard pupils read. Inspectors looked in detail at the progress of identified pupils through their work and assessment records. Inspectors took account of the four responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, the six pupil responses to the questionnaire and the 20 responses to the staff questionnaire.