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Mr Adam Brewster
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Dear Mr Brewster

Short inspection of Heltwate School

Following my visit to the school on 20 November 2018 with Lynda Walker, 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 November 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. During the last year, there has been some uncertainty about plans for developing the school site. Despite this and the significant increase in pupil numbers since the previous inspection, you and your leaders have maintained the well-being and positivity of pupils which are at the centre of your work.

Pupils are happy and settled within the school's extremely nurturing environment. It is testament to you and the skills of your committed team that pupils behave well. They are carefully supervised and breaktimes are a calm affair. Pupils' behaviour is exceptional in the dining hall. They manage their meals without fuss and enjoy the orderly environment. Adults make sure that pupils are supported so that they can all enjoy this important social time of day.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum enables pupils to have many opportunities to learn through practical and real-life experiences. For example, inspectors observed pupils enjoying a cooking lesson that required them to follow a recipe. Pupils learned to set a table with knives and forks and eventually appreciated their hard work by eating the meal that they had cooked themselves.

Adults work effectively with pupils to ensure that they are making the progress they should. For example, when appropriate, instructions are clearly set out with pictures to help pupils recognise what to do next. Adults make sure that classrooms are

vibrant and exciting places to learn. In all the lessons visited by inspectors, pupils were enthusiastic about learning and keenly involved in their activities. Pupils are helped to understand the progress they are making through, for example, the school's chosen system for awarding effort grades in each lesson. This is clearly understood by the pupils. Inspectors observed pupils' excitement as they received an effort grade that demonstrated how successfully they had worked towards their individual targets.

Since the previous inspection, you have made sure that staff are fully aware of the responsibilities within their job roles. You have empowered staff to take on leadership roles for which they are held to account. In addition, you are perceptive at recognising where staff have shown an aptitude and a willingness to develop their skills further. This has ensured that staff are more effective in their work and make more of a contribution to the leadership of the school, helping to raise standards. This is particularly the case in the monitoring and analysis of behaviour, attendance and pupils' progress information. Leaders are astute in their evaluation of these areas and the impact of their work. You are successfully creating a cohesive team that works towards a common goal to improve pupils' outcomes.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all staff and governors have had relevant safeguarding training. Your system for checking and recording the suitability of all those who work with pupils in the school is maintained rigorously by your office staff. Evidence shows that records are routinely checked by governors and the safeguarding leader.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe and parents and carers who spoke with inspectors agree. Pupils confirm that if they have any worries, they are confident to speak with an adult at school. They are sure that their concerns would be dealt with well. Pupils also show an appropriate awareness of online safety and cyber bullying.

You and your leaders ensure that processes for reporting concerns about pupils' safety and welfare are strong. Staff understand these processes and leaders take swift actions when there are concerns to ensure that pupils get the help they need in a timely manner.

Leaders ensure that behaviour support plans in place for pupils are appropriately shared with relevant staff. The plans are detailed, with helpful information for staff to understand what triggers pupils' challenging behaviour. These help staff to take the appropriate steps to support pupils effectively.

The majority of staff agree that pupils are kept safe, and that pupils' behaviour is managed well. However, a very small number of staff commented in response to Ofsted's online staff survey that they do not feel well enough supported in managing the behaviour of those pupils who present significantly challenging behaviour. You know that with the growing complexity of your pupils' needs, it is a priority for leaders to routinely review staff development, training and support.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to look at how leaders measure pupils' progress across different learning areas, taking into account their individual needs. Systems for measuring pupils' progress are detailed and comprehensive. Pupils' objectives result from their individual education, health and care plans' overarching targets. These include developing key aspects of learning such as communication, reasoning and social and emotional skills. You rightly check that these areas are closely monitored and evaluated routinely for each pupil.
- You hold regular meetings to identify which pupils are not on track to make the progress expected. Teachers identify pupils' barriers to learning and adults then provide one-to-one support so that pupils can make the progress expected of them. You work closely with parents to ensure that they clearly understand how well their children are developing in specific areas of learning. For example, you deliver workshops to explain how teachers assess pupils' progress. Parents receive clear and concise written information about how well their children are achieving.
- My second line of enquiry was concerned with how leaders ensure that the curriculum meets pupils' wide range of needs effectively. You have carefully chosen a curriculum that supports pupils' learning across all subject areas. Teachers use the curriculum to plan learning that provides pupils with opportunities to transfer practical skills into real-life situations. In one lesson, pupils were enthusiastically learning about money and what it can buy. Visits to the supermarket give pupils the chance to practise how to behave appropriately and begin to understand how to use money and its value.
- Teachers carefully plan activities so that pupils can recognise connections across subjects. In one lesson, inspectors observed pupils learning about autumn and then chopping and eating vegetables associated with the season. Pupils' art work uses vegetables to create colourful paintings. In another lesson, pupils created their ideas of autumn through pictures created on the computer.
- Additional adults support pupils well. During a mathematics lesson, pupils were learning about clockwise rotation and direction. Adults use skilful questioning to extend pupils' thinking. Adults provide appropriate support so that pupils can approach tasks with confidence and a degree of independence. Pupils enjoy the challenge of, and want to do well in, individual tasks that are closely matched to their ability.
- My final line of enquiry was to establish how effectively leaders are supporting pupils for life beyond Heltwate and into adulthood. You have a separate site where teaching and learning for some of the key stage 4 and 5 pupils who will be moving on to college take place. You have strong transition arrangements to support students with their move to college. Your post-16 'Olympic Challenge' curriculum teaches a range of very important and necessary skills for adulthood.
- The post-16 curriculum does not develop students' skills, knowledge and understanding sufficiently from key stage 4 to key stage 5. Students are not fully prepared for their next steps in education or employment by the time they leave the school, particularly for the most able pupils. Leaders acknowledge that there

is still more work to do to ensure that the curriculum enables students to progress effectively from key stage 4 to key stage 5 so that they are prepared as well as they can be for adulthood.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff receive appropriate support and training to develop their skills when working with pupils who display challenging behaviour
- the post-16 curriculum builds on the good work from the previous key stages to prepare students in developing skills for their next destination and adulthood.

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

Yours sincerely

Cindy Impey
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors discussed the key lines of enquiry for this inspection, areas for further improvement and information about current pupils' progress. Meetings were held with you, senior leaders and four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. I also spoke with your school improvement partner and an inspector met with the school council.

Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined. Inspectors gathered a range of evidence on how school leaders assess the progress pupils make. This included joint meetings with you, the deputy headteacher and senior and middle leaders. Inspectors visited all classrooms, jointly with you and your deputy headteacher. Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work.

The views of six parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account, as well as the three responses parents made using the free-text service. Several parents were spoken with at the beginning of the school day. Inspectors also considered the school's own recent parent survey. The 48 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey were also considered to obtain staff views.