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Mr Jarlath O'Brien
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Dear Mr O'Brien

Short inspection of Carwarden House Community School

Following my visit to the school on 27 June 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

You have led the school with dedication and compassion for pupils to secure an effective education that will equip them very well for their future lives. You are ambitious for pupils and aspire for them to be empowered personally and to gain accreditation that they can build upon in the future. Staff, governors and parents share your aspirations and are dedicated to the pursuit of this aim. Parents and staff speak highly of your leadership, with one parent stating that you have 'a real passion to create a learning environment where children can flourish and feel valued and nurtured'.

Governors add to the capacity of the school to improve further. They ask probing questions and challenge you when appropriate because they have the necessary skills and knowledge to do so. Governors take into account the views of stakeholders when making important decisions. They pay due regard to the financial stability of the school and have a clear strategic vision for the future. Governors share your devotion towards the school and its pupils. As a result of your leadership and that of other senior leaders, alongside effective governance, the school has continued to thrive and enhanced its effectiveness. Consequently, the leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You know the strengths of the school and you are clear and reflective about what could be even better. For example, following recent changes to the leadership

structure of the school, you are rightly focusing on developing the ability of middle leaders to have a full impact on areas for school improvement and on enabling them to support you in raising the quality of teaching across the school. You know that this will further improve the capacity of leaders to drive improvement more swiftly and effectively. The governing body is equally evaluative about the school and honest about what still needs to be achieved.

You and your staff have worked hard to meet the recommendations from the previous inspection of your predecessor school. As a result, teachers are largely using what they know about pupils to plan activities that meet pupils' needs precisely. However, more needs to be done to make certain that information from pupils' education, health and care plans is taken into account. In the best examples, teachers provide advice and support during lessons so that pupils are clear about how to make their learning better.

You have made certain that the school improvement plan is focused on important areas for development. Yet, the improvement priorities are not widely known by all, which prevents them from contributing towards your goals for the school as effectively as they could. Nonetheless, you are continually motivated to raise standards in the best interests for pupils and have led with moral determination that the pupils in your school should have access to the best education possible. You know what needs to be accomplished to make the school even better, such as enabling the most able pupils to make the progress of which they are capable. While nearly all staff are proud to work at the school, even more could be done to ensure they are united in feeling part of the school's onward journey towards outstanding.

You have sought and welcomed opportunities to work alongside other schools in the vicinity to share good practice to further improve staff's skills and the school's effectiveness. This has helped you secure improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

Interactions between staff and pupils are warm, empathetic and positive. Positive relationships underpin the school's strong culture of vigilance and care. As a result, pupils feel safe. They are clear in their belief that there is a member of staff they would turn to if they were worried. Most pupils are positive about behaviour in the school and nearly all pupils feel that bullying either does not happen or is exceptionally rare. If it does occur, pupils are confident that staff would deal with it.

The school's focus on teaching pupils how to keep themselves safe is impressive. For example, older pupils learn extensively about sex and relationships and sexual health. Pupils are taught about British values, which are underpinned by the school's own values of respect, responsibility, care and resilience, for example. The school brings these to life throughout the curriculum. For instance, pupils celebrate difference and uniqueness and learn how to care for the environment.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Staff are acutely aware of their duty to protect pupils from harm. They are clear about the processes and systems to follow if they are concerned about a pupil's well-being or the behaviour of a colleague.

Parents are very positive about the safety of their children and the openness and approachability of staff when dealing with any issues or concerns they might have. As one parent reflected, 'Staff are friendly and caring and pay attention to the individual needs of each child'. This strong alliance between the school and parents has engendered trust and commitment to the school and, consequently, had a positive impact on pupils' academic progress and personal development.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, inspectors focused on how well leaders have continued to improve standards at the school. We examined the progress that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils, are currently making across a range of subjects. We were particularly interested to see whether the quality of teaching and learning was consistently strong across the school. We focused on how well pupils are prepared for the next stage of their education and equipped with the skills to help them be successful when they leave school. In addition, we evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding and how well the school supports families of pupils who have too many days off school.
- From their different starting points, pupils make good progress in a wide range of subjects, including pupils who are disadvantaged. Effective use of pupil premium funding, alongside the school's commitment to meet the needs of individuals, means that this group of pupils does as well as their peers. Pupils' work shows that they are acquiring effective knowledge and skills, especially in mathematics and in their personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). Pupils are learning important literacy skills such as punctuation and grammar, which they use effectively across other subjects, such as history. Pupils make very strong progress in reading because it is given a high priority by the school. Pupils' spelling is equally impressive, reinforced by effective phonics teaching.
- Pupils typically attain entry-level certificates in reading, writing and in computing, as well as a range of other accredited outcomes, including level 1 qualifications in English and mathematics and GCSE science. Furthermore, leaders are implementing plans to introduce a wider range of higher qualifications for the most able pupils.
- Over time, the quality of teaching and learning is consistently strong across the school and in a wide range of subjects, leading to good outcomes. Teachers are working hard to think of creative ways to engage pupils in learning and to make activities relevant and meaningful. For example, in mathematics pupils practise using money by calculating how much change they would receive if they purchased a mobile telephone. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to rehearse their English and mathematics in a range of subjects. For instance, in

PSHE pupils used a Venn diagram to illustrate what they had in common and what was different about them and their classmates.

- Overall, pupils' learning needs are met well by staff who know pupils as individuals. When teaching is most effective, pupils are encouraged to think deeply and teachers check pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding systematically to adapt learning. Teaching assistants effectively support pupils and help them to tackle work with confidence. They allow pupils to build valuable independent skills and encourage them to persevere.
- Occasionally, pupils wait too long for their classmates to finish their work, complete work they can already do, or repeat work that is too easy for them. This inhibits the progress that pupils make, particularly the most able. In addition, information from pupils' education, health and care plans could be used more effectively by teachers to target pupils' academic and non-academic next steps, and to ensure that activities are focused on pupils gaining knowledge, skills and understanding.
- You have made it your ambition to prepare pupils well for the next stage of their lives when they leave the school. You have been highly successful in this endeavour. As an illustration, a parent explained that the school had given their child many opportunities to prepare for a recent residential trip by learning about the size and weight of a suitcase; learning about the value of a euro; learning Spanish words; trying Spanish food; undertaking swimming lessons and writing lists of what to pack. A parent expressed, 'The school has changed my child's attitude towards learning, building friendships and her drive for independence.'
- Pupils are prepared exceptionally well for the next stage of their education because of the progress they make at school and because the school works effectively with local colleges to ensure that the needs of pupils are met. Pupils are given effective careers advice by the school that enables them to think about career pathways that build upon their interests. Pupils are supported to write college applications and compose curriculum vitae.
- Leaders are trying hard to ensure that pupils and students attend work experience, while they are in Years 10, 11, 12 and 13, that is linked to their skills and interests. Many useful partnerships have been forged with local businesses that offer pupils a range of opportunities such as work in retail, front of house at a hotel and in housekeeping. From Year 11, pupils and students have the opportunity to undertake extended work experience placements which are uniquely tailored to their needs and enable them to pursue a pathway into the world of work. A parent reflected the views of many by writing: 'I am sure [the school staff] want nothing but the best for my child, are well qualified to provide that, and are preparing them well for the future.'
- You and your staff have worked hard to make sure that pupils attend school every day. Commendably, attendance is above the national average for special schools. The school works closely with families if pupils are unable to attend school as often as they would like to, for example due to medical grounds, to ensure that minimal learning time is lost. Importantly, pupils are enthused by learning and enjoy coming to school. A studious atmosphere pervades the school because pupils display excellent attitudes towards learning. During this inspection

pupils keenly shared their work with inspectors and were justifiably proud of their achievements. This was particularly evident in a design and technology lessons when pupils spoke confidently about the processes they were following to make a bird box. By the end of the lesson, some pupils had progressed from following plans to measuring components accurately to completing the task. Pupils beamed with delight as they tried to convince inspectors to purchase beautifully hand-made planters for a mere £25.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- ensure that staff are aware of the school improvement priorities so that they contribute to, and feel part of, the continued development of the school
- continue to develop the skills and expertise of middle leaders so that they are increasingly able to support senior leaders in raising standards across the school
- make certain that pupils' education, health and care plans are taken fully into account when targeting pupils' academic and non-academic learning, and that targets are appropriately challenging
- make sure that information about what pupils can already do and understand is used to plan learning that challenges the most able pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Abigail Birch
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

We met with you, other school leaders and three members of the governing body. We observed learning, with you and the deputy headteacher, in all key stages and observed pupils at breaktime. We spoke to pupils during lessons, and met with them formally to gather their views. We looked at pupils' work in a range of subjects, including English; mathematics; art; and PSHE. We also looked at pupils' work in lessons. We took account of 18 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and nine written contributions made by parents, also online. We also took account of an email contribution made by a parent and the views of parents whom we spoke to at the end of the school day. In addition, we met with a group of staff to gather their views about the school. We also took into account the 39 contributions made by staff to the voluntary staff survey. We analysed a range of the school's documentation, including information about the achievement of pupils, school policies, such as the school's behaviour policy, and safeguarding procedures.

We examined the school's website. We also discussed your self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness with you and other school leaders.