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Mr Anthony Roberts
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Dear Mr Roberts

Short inspection of Stanley School

Following my visit to the school on 11 July 2017 with Claire Hollister, 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school successfully since the last inspection because staff are fully committed to ensuring that pupils are exceptionally well cared for. All staff, teaching and non-teaching, work together as a cohesive team in planning seamless support for pupils throughout the day. This support does not stop when pupils leave school at the end of the day, but extends to support for families to help them to meet their children's needs at home. As a result, this school provides a complete care package from the moment pupils arrive to when they move on to secondary school.

Parents who spoke with inspectors or who responded to Ofsted's survey, Parent View, are overwhelmingly positive about the care that their children receive. They told us how, through the support provided, their children had developed. Often from starting points with no verbal communication, little eye contact and unable to display emotions other than frustration, children progress to using simple sentences, smiling and being able to play and work alongside friends. Parents talked about how this has transformed family life at home and how much their children enjoy coming to school.

Since your last inspection, you have been appointed as headteacher and you have a new deputy headteacher. You have moved into a fabulous new building and have welcomed pupils who have profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD) from their previous school that closed. From a period of managing considerable disruption, you are now back on track to a focus on improving learning.

One of my key lines of enquiry during this inspection was to find out how you had tackled the recommendations made at the time of your last inspection.

You have introduced a new way of setting targets for pupils. Teachers are confident in giving pupils the next steps in their learning. Teachers plan personalised work and activities to help pupils to meet their targets each lesson. Personal and social development targets are also set, with a focus on improving concentration, attention and developing resilience. As a result of your approach to target-setting and planning, pupils' progress is improving rapidly in literacy and numeracy. Incidents of serious behaviour have dramatically reduced. However, you are not yet able to demonstrate strong progress in other subjects. This is because you have not developed ways of assessing pupils' progress accurately in subjects like science, history, geography and design and technology, for example.

Teachers have moved away from the whole-class teaching seen at your last inspection, which failed to interest or meet the needs of all pupils. Through the good-quality training and support you have provided, teachers readily use a wider range of strategies to engage pupils. This is because they provide more opportunities for pupils to learn at their own pace, using activities and resources that interest them. A few teachers are still developing these skills. Sometimes they leave pupils too long to work on their own rather than providing more-timely intervention when pupils are in difficulty.

Governors now have a much better understanding of how the pupil premium funding is used to help pupils who are entitled to this support, because you break down the spending on each key action. You also provide governors with information on the impact of spending on this group's overall progress. However, the achievement information that you give to governors does not tell them enough about pupils' progress across the curriculum, in each class or for each key stage. Governors are therefore not yet fully effective because they don't know enough about where teaching is having the greatest impact on learning or if leaders' improvement work is making enough of a difference.

During my inspection, I also wanted to find out about the reasons for girls' low attendance in 2016 and if this was slowing their learning. You are aware of this weakness. You told me about the many strategies you have in place to follow up non-attendance of vulnerable pupils quickly. For example, contact is made with home, social workers and the educational welfare officer. You also carry out a home visit when you are concerned about the safety or welfare of a pupil. In cases where parents have been particularly hard to reach, you have even contacted the police to make certain no pupil is at risk of harm. Nevertheless, girls' attendance figures continue to be low. This is due to a very small number of families who take extended holidays during term-time and where parents themselves have difficulty coping due to their medical and mental health needs.

My final key line of enquiry was to look at the quality of your curriculum, including how well prepared pupils are for life in modern Britain. You also asked me to focus on the provision in the early years, an area you are particularly proud of, which I agreed to do.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Due to the close working relationship that you have with the adjoining mainstream primary school, you carry out extra checks to make sure that your pupils are safeguarded at all times. Staff who have free access between the two schools have had the necessary checks on their suitability to be employed, carried out before they started work. You have been successful in creating a culture where all staff understand their responsibility to keep vulnerable pupils safe. There is regular staff training on safeguarding and supporting pupils' medical, health and personal care needs. Staff have also completed training in looking out for the signs of extremist and radical views, female genital mutilation, child sexual exploitation and the safe use of mobile phones and social media. All staff, who were asked, know the correct procedures to follow if they have concerns about a pupil.

You make sure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe. Pupils who talked with an inspector explained confidently how to stay safe when using the internet. They know about the potential dangers when they come across people they do not know. They know how to eat healthily and the importance of exercise and also know about the harm that smoking can cause, for example. Pupils have a good understanding of what bullying is and told the inspector that this doesn't happen in their school.

Inspection findings

- You provide pupils with a broad and rich curriculum which makes full use of your amazing facilities and resources to make sure that pupils experience a wide range of different experiences and opportunities, both inside and outside the classroom. For example, all pupils are taught how to swim in your swimming pool and the hydrotherapy pool provides additional therapy for pupils needing this support. There are specialist areas for physiotherapy, speech and language development on site. The medical rooms provide rooms for medical professionals to provide treatment to pupils to avoid absences from school to attend appointments for these services elsewhere.
- Your learning outside the classroom curriculum is improving pupils' personal development and social needs. This is particularly the case for pupils who have PMLD who joined the school earlier this academic year. Working in small groups with plenty of adult support, pupils are often taken out of school for visits to broaden their experiences. For example, pupils went shopping to give them experience of working with money.
- Pupils have an understanding of British values. They know about the government and can name the leaders of the main political parties. Pupils have a clear understanding of the value in showing respect for one another and can explain what is right and wrong. For example, they know that it is totally unacceptable to bully someone.
- Pupils are safe and well cared for as they make the journey to and from school. Transport is provided for pupils whose parents are unable to bring them to school. Escorts in taxis and minibuses provide a consistent and welcoming face for pupils and establish effective two-way communication between home and school. For example,

difficulties at home are shared and passed on to teachers, while praise for the day's work in school is shared with parents.

- You have a strong and effective leader in early years, who has made sure that children are safe and that welfare requirements are met. Children are assessed accurately upon arrival, providing a baseline upon which to build learning. For example, the skills for learning profile includes assessment of sensory processing and communication, as many children start school with no verbal communication skills. Teachers, and other adults, who work in the three early years classrooms work exceptionally well together. Their collaborative planning ensures equality of provision for all children in their care. However, some targets set for children are not sufficiently challenging because teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough. The diary provides an effective means of communication between home and school, especially with regard to social development. It is less effective in updating parents on learning and progress such as in literacy and numeracy.
- Parents of the oldest pupils in school say that they are sad that their relationship with the school is drawing to an end. Pupils typically transfer to one of three special schools in the area. You make sure that transition arrangements are effective, through opportunities for school visits for pupils and parents, meetings for parents with secondary school staff and organising meetings between teachers of both schools. Transition takes place smoothly, reducing stress for pupils and their parents.
- Governors are suitably skilled and knowledgeable about some of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, leaders' self-evaluation is overly generous because it is not based on up-to-date, robust information, such as current pupils' academic progress across the curriculum, other than in English and mathematics. Governors therefore do not have a fully accurate picture of the school. Governors have not checked carefully enough if the school website meets the Department for Education requirements. During the inspection, you improved further the pupil premium strategy information that you provide to parents on your school website. The impact on tackling pupils' barriers to learning has now been made clearer. Urgent action was taken to tackle other omissions during the inspection, with further more substantial changes planned as you move to a new school website design.
- Governors are unable to hold leaders to account well enough for the actions stated in the school improvement plan. This is because there is no named person or deadline for the actions, which have not been costed out. Success criteria are vague and there is no indication as to how the work will be evaluated. Governors are therefore unable to see if improvements are happening quickly enough or are having the desired effect.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- plans to extend assessment and target-setting to include all subjects across the curriculum are introduced quickly, so that leaders can monitor pupils' progress across the curriculum accurately, as leaders already do in English and in mathematics
- self-evaluation is based on accurate and up-to-date information on the quality of provision and learning for current pupils

- school improvement plans are sharpened, so that governors are better able to hold people to account for improvement work and can be confident that the school continues to improve.

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

Yours sincerely

Denah Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, a range of activities were carried out to gather information on the key lines of enquiry. Inspectors met with you, your deputy headteacher, your data lead and the leader of early years. Inspectors talked with staff, governors, parents, transport escorts and a representative from the local authority. An inspector had a telephone conversation with an educational consultant providing support for the school. Both inspectors spoke with pupils during the day in lessons and more formally in a meeting with representatives from the school council. You and your deputy headteacher joined inspectors in short visits to lessons to see the impact of the changes you have made in response to your last inspection. A range of documentation was also scrutinised to find out about your monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment, your improvement and action plans and safeguarding procedures in school.