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Mrs Julie Foster
Headteacher
Russet House School
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Dear Mrs Foster

**Short inspection of Russet House School**

Following my visit to the school on 31 January 2017 with Ofsted Inspector Jill Thomas, 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 outstanding in May 2013.

**This school continues to be outstanding.**

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have secured still further improvements in the school, as well as contributing significantly to other settings. The school is a centre of excellence within the local authority, providing an advisory service and offering specialist advice and training for those schools with pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder across the borough. You have a breadth and depth of expertise in autistic spectrum disorder which are equalled by your excellent leadership skills. The school has undeniably benefited from a sustained period of highly effective leadership, resulting in outstanding teaching and outstanding pupil progress, academically and personally. You have identified and nurtured leadership potential and talent within the school. As a result, new leaders at all levels have secured sustained improvements in key areas. You have also successfully improved the effectiveness of home-school liaison, an area for improvement identified at the last inspection.

Pupils love coming to school, as reflected in their good attendance rates. You and your staff have created a calm, purposeful and highly inclusive learning environment. School routines are adhered to by all. This provides pupils with a sense of familiarity and security, thus reducing any potential stress or anxiety for them. Staff are adept at pre-empting any disruptive behaviour because they have an in-depth knowledge of pupils. Staff consistently give pupils clear instructions and feedback about their behaviour and work, through discussion, signing and the use of symbols. As a result, pupils stay on task and interact positively with adults and

sometimes with other pupils. This also allows pupils to become increasingly independent in their learning.

**Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. All information is systematically recorded and reviewed on a regular basis. This includes a rolling programme of checks to make sure that all statutory requirements are met.

Staff are vigilant in identifying any concerns and possible issues relating to all safeguarding concerns. Important information is shared on a daily basis to ensure that appropriate support is put in place to secure both adults' and pupils' safety. This includes parent-support advisers who, together with staff, implement appropriate strategies, including specialist help for parents and their children when required. Liaison work with a wide range of agencies is excellent, making sure that issues are dealt with in a timely manner.

Leaders make sure that all the relevant checks on members of staff, governors and other adults in the school are completed. The single central record is kept up to date and regularly checked by the governor linked to safeguarding.

There are very few concerns about antisocial behaviour and bullying expressed by parents, staff and pupils. Their views are supported by the very low number of serious behavioural incidents.

## Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry in this inspection focused on the capacity of leaders to secure further improvements, particularly in maintaining outstanding teaching and learning.
- You have wisely focused on improving the quality of teaching. The revised leadership structure now includes a staff tutor who plays a pivotal role in securing tailored training and support for all staff, including those new to the school and the teaching profession. As with all improvement strategies, you use an enquiry-based model to test out the effectiveness of new approaches and their impact on teaching and learning. Staff work alongside each other to promote and share strengths in their practice, across key stages. The open and honest ethos you and leaders encourage provides all staff with the confidence and determination to continue to improve their practice.
- You have made sure that senior and middle leaders are held fully to account for their remits. Middle leaders now have responsibility for raising the quality of teaching and pupil progress in their phase. They too are a vital component in the school improvement cycle. They nurture effective practice through coaching and mentoring their colleagues. As a consequence, highly effective teaching and learning have been sustained and strengthened.

- Leaders, including governors, are exceptionally well informed about the strengths of the school and the potential challenges to be dealt with. There are well-designed plans to make sure that priorities are targeted successfully. Nevertheless, although some documents identify measureable outcomes, these are not transferred to the school improvement plan. This makes it more difficult for leaders, including governors, to know precisely the impact of their improvement work.
- The second line of enquiry centred on the accuracy of the new assessment system so that learners continue to make outstanding progress.
- Leaders explained to inspectors that the new assessment procedure now enables staff to measure more precisely small but important steps in pupils' learning and personal development. Evidence from the initial pilot to measure pupils' personal development, including their communication skills, confirms that progress is currently strong.
- Teachers use assessment information to plan highly personalised learning programmes. Individual pupil progress profiles, using photographs and pupils' work, are built up to demonstrate clear evidence of rapid progress for all learners, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able.
- Staff set aspirational targets to challenge pupils to achieve their very best. Those pupils who are able are encouraged to reflect on their learning. Assessments are accurate as a result of regular moderation in school and externally with other settings.
- Finally, the third line of enquiry concentrated on the work you have undertaken since the last inspection in relation to strengthening home-school partnerships. You explained that the research undertaken by a senior leader has been used to identify successful strategies so that parents are more effectively involved in their children's education.
- This includes a project to raise pupils' achievement in reading. A key aspect of this was to raise teachers' confidence in helping parents to support their child's reading at home. More-able pupils read to inspectors with fluency, using their phonics knowledge well to read unfamiliar words.
- Teachers foster very strong partnerships with parents. There are highly effective lines of communication between home and school. They include shared learning experiences, workshops, home visits and the use of videos to demonstrate to parents how well their children learn in school and vice versa. Parents are overwhelmingly appreciative of the school's work, saying that 'the school is a lifeline for them'.

## Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- measurable targets are referenced in school improvement planning, when appropriate, in relation to the quality of teaching and pupil progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Mary Hinds
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Information about the inspection

Inspectors agreed to prioritise the following areas with school leaders at the start of the inspection:

- the effectiveness of leaders at all levels in securing outstanding teaching and learning
- the accuracy of assessments to check whether pupils make outstanding progress
- whether the actions to address the recommendation of the previous inspection have been successful.

Inspectors carried out the following activities to explore these areas during the inspection. Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, a group of staff and governors, including the chair of the governing body. A discussion was held with the chief education officer for the local authority. Inspectors observed learning in most classes and scrutinised work and progress information relating to a selection of pupils. A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including those relating to school improvement and safeguarding. The school's parental surveys, 15 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and 47 staff responses were also taken into consideration.