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Mrs Carla Chandler
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Chandler

Short inspection of Melrose School

Following my visit to the school on 15 May 2018 with Lori Mackey, 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 September 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

The school belongs to a partnership of Merton's specialist education support schools, collectively known as Melbury College, of which you are the executive headteacher. Since taking up post at the beginning of 2017, you have made a number of positive changes within the school. You have increased leadership capacity by revising your senior team and developing middle leader posts. This has led to a sharper focus on implementing school improvement priorities. You acknowledge that the new systems that have been introduced now need time to embed fully throughout the school so that all leaders have a clear understanding of their individual and joint responsibilities.

The recently reviewed vision and values are apparent in the ethos of the school. There is an emphasis on the development of the 'whole child' through personalised learning to meet individual needs. The school has a calm and purposeful atmosphere.

Pupils say that they feel happy and are well supported by staff. They have positive attitudes and are enthusiastic about the school's rewards system and how they can gain points towards their chosen reward. Pupils talk about their future career aspirations and have a clear idea of how to reach their goals. Pupils behave well overall and any issues are dealt with effectively and promptly. The behaviour for learning in lessons we visited was strong.

Staff morale is high and they are truly dedicated to their work. They describe themselves as a family, all supporting one another and say that leaders look after their well-being effectively. Staff say that there have been many recent changes but recognise that these are to benefit the pupils. They believe that pupils are challenged to make at least good progress with both their academic and social development and that pupils are safe in the school.

Governors know the school well and have an accurate view of its strengths and areas for development. They are ambitious and provide strong strategic leadership.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and recording systems are secure. Checks on the suitability of new staff to work with children are thorough and meet all requirements. Staff are well trained and know what to do if they have a concern about a child's welfare. Regular updates keep a focus on pupils' safety at all times and there is effective working with other agencies. Staff understand the potential risks to pupils in the community, such as from extremism, child sexual exploitation, gangs, knife crime, online safety and other issues. They teach pupils how to keep themselves safe from these risks. Pupils learn about healthy lifestyles and the effects of drug taking, smoking and alcohol abuse. Pupils say that they feel safe in school. Most parents and carers agreed in the school's own survey that the school keeps their child safe.

Inspection findings

- We agreed on some key lines of enquiry at the beginning of the inspection. First, we agreed to look at what leaders had done to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment since the previous inspection.
- Leaders are successfully raising expectations and improving the quality of teaching through a number of actions. A robust monitoring cycle has been introduced, including formal lesson observations and looking at pupils' work in books. Also, a fortnightly focus on improving specific aspects of teaching, such as literacy, has contributed to improving standards. These actions, along with effective performance management and support for teachers where needed, has resulted in consistently strong teaching across the school.
- Pupils mostly listen and engage in lessons. Teachers plan work that is personalised for individual pupils and this helps them to stay on task and complete their learning. Pupils learn well across subjects. They are keen to discuss what they have been doing and answer questions about their work well. Pupils are particularly interested and absorbed in lessons where there are practical tasks to complete.
- Next, we agreed to look at the progress pupils make over time and how well the curriculum prepares them for the next stage of their lives. The school's assessment information shows that most pupils make at least the progress leaders expect in their academic subjects and social development from their starting points. Leaders have ensured that very personalised planning is in place and this results in pupils making strong progress.

- The curriculum offers a wide range of learning opportunities that suit the needs of pupils and prepares them well for the next stage of their education and training. Effective links with local colleges and vocational education providers ensure that pupils are able to study courses directly related to future career aspirations. Pupils gain a growing number of suitable qualifications. You are currently further developing careers guidance and work experience to strengthen provision in this area. Social development opportunities form part of the curriculum offer. Each pupil has an assigned mentor and there are personalised interventions where appropriate.
- Finally, we agreed to look at the impact of leaders' actions to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. Attendance is tracked carefully for individual pupils and school data shows improvements on previous years. There are complex reasons why some pupils are not able to attend as regularly as they should and support is sought from other professionals where appropriate. Pupils now attend another provision in the Melbury College partnership for internal exclusions, reducing the number of fixed-term exclusions. This enables them to continue their education and ensures that they are safe and well cared for.
- You acknowledge the importance of continuing to improve pupils' attendance. Furthermore, you are currently working on improving parental engagement with the school and this should help improve outcomes, including attendance, for pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the new systems are fully embedded and leaders at all levels are clear on their individual and joint responsibilities
- they continue to improve pupils' attendance
- they further develop the engagement of parents and carers leading to improved outcomes for 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 Merton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Tarrant
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspection team met with you and your head of school, assistant headteachers, middle leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, mentors and safer schools police officer. We met with the school business manager to review the school's single

central record of staff suitability checks. We also met with members of the governing body, including the chair. We held telephone interviews with the school improvement adviser and one parent. Inspectors visited classes across the school accompanied by you and the head of school to gather a range of evidence related to teaching, learning and assessment. They met with pupils to talk about their experience of school and aspects of safeguarding. Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, school development plan, assessment and progress records. Inspectors took account of the 19 responses to the staff questionnaire. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire or to Parent View.