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Mrs Helen Middleton
Principal
Moor House School & College
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Dear Mrs Middleton

Short inspection of Moor House School & College

Following my visit to the school on 3 October 2017 with Hilary Goddard, 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 outstanding in June 2014.

This school continues to be outstanding.

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

Since your appointment as headteacher you have built on the outstanding strengths of the school and ensured that it has remained a centre of excellence. You have appointed a talented new leadership team that benefits from fresh ideas from a range of different settings. These new leaders work extremely well with those leaders that already bring significant experience of speech and language development to the school. Together, the leadership team is reflective, ambitious and determined. Complacency is never an issue, and further improvements to make the school even better are always considered.

It has been a time of significant growth for the school, especially in the number of day pupils and the expansion of the college. This growth is against the backdrop of significant national changes to the curriculum, assessment and qualifications. Impressively, you have risen above these challenges to maintain and build upon the strong progress pupils make and to raise standards even further.

All changes and improvements are based firmly on evidence and research. You and other school leaders learn from each other, from your pupils and from wider research to make decisions that you know will benefit the pupils. The whole team works together cohesively to achieve the very best for pupils. Parents are

overwhelmingly positive about the school and the difference it has made to their children's well-being and progress. One parent explained, 'This is an amazing school that creates a wonderful positive learning environment.'

Governors are determined that the school's four aims for pupils are achieved. These are that pupils will overcome their language difficulties, achieve well academically, form relationships independently and make a positive contribution to society. My colleague and I certainly saw many strong examples of this being achieved during our visit. All students go on to meaningful further education, employment or training. However, governors also care about how well students are doing in the years after they leave. The school keeps in contact with them so that it can learn from their experiences beyond Moor House and improve things further for current pupils.

Pupils are very well cared for and have no concerns about bullying, behaviour or safety. One pupil explained how the school had helped her, 'put the pieces of [her] life back together like a jigsaw'. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning and their social time. They are extremely polite and respectful to visitors, staff and each other and are very willing to share their experiences and views. A few pupils would like more opportunities to take part in extra-curricular clubs and sports. The current arrangements for homework being completed at school sometimes prevent this.

At the time of the previous inspection you were asked to ensure that all teachers' written comments showed pupils how to improve their learning. Leaders had developed a system that recorded the feedback that pupils were receiving about their learning and their responses. However, you realised that this was not the most effective way of providing feedback for pupils. You are now changing your whole approach to assessment and feedback so that it fits more closely with the school's unique curriculum. Plans are in place to assess beyond the academic elements so that leaders and staff can have a full and detailed understanding of each pupil's needs, attainment and progress. For example the 'Compass of Independence' tracks the way pupils develop life skills such as managing money and preparing meals.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, training is up to date and records are detailed and of high quality. Checks on staff recruitment are rigorous and expectations about staff conduct are rightly high.

You have ensured that a suitable number of staff from across the school are trained as safeguarding leads. This gives you greater flexibility and means that staff always have someone available to share concerns with. You have stringent systems in place to ensure that information is shared appropriately. Regular supervision allows safeguarding leads to reflect on and improve their practice. Your team works appropriately with other professionals, as needed, to keep pupils safe.

Your team is acutely aware of the particular risks your pupils face and is especially alive to the changing challenges of online safety, including grooming. You carefully assess the risks to pupils and students when they are travelling to or from school and when learning in the community. However, you manage to get an appropriate balance between their safety and their independence.

Inspection findings

- During this short inspection we agreed to investigate:
 - how well standards have been maintained, given the changes in leadership
 - the progress students are making in the college (16 to 19 provision) and when attending alternate providers
 - and how well the curriculum promotes the development of knowledge, understanding and skills in a wide range of subjects.
- Since the previous inspection you have become headteacher, three new assistant headteachers have joined the school, and the chair of the governing body has changed. During this period of change outcomes for pupils have improved, most notably at GCSE in English and science.
- Pupils across the school make rapid and sometimes exceptional progress because of the school's multi-disciplinary approach that includes high-quality teaching and therapy. As a result, a much greater proportion of pupils is now being entered for GCSE and other level 2 qualifications at the end of Year 11.
- Teaching is tailored outstandingly well to meet pupils' individual needs. A consistent approach to promoting and modelling speech and language across the school, and a range of innovative resources, helps pupils to succeed.
- Pupils in key stage 2 make strong progress in developing their language and life skills. Leaders are developing a new assessment tool to recognise this, and plan next steps that they believe will lead to faster academic progress.
- Staff, pupils and parents confirm that the high standard of behaviour seen during this inspection is typical. Governors and leaders fiercely guard the school's admissions policy so that only those pupils who have a primary speech and language needs are admitted. This prevents distractions from other needs and maintains a harmonious school community.
- As the 16 to 19 provision in the college has grown, you have opened up additional pathways and options for students. Every student has a personal programme and is working towards suitable qualifications. Students have therapy sessions and English and mathematics lessons at the college to help them achieve level 2 qualifications, unless they have already done so. However, some of their time is off site at partner colleges, studying a range of vocational courses. Students also have meaningful work-experience placements. To develop independence there are planned supported study times for students to deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- More and more students are being entered for level 3 qualifications. Every student leaves Moor House to go on to further education, training,

apprenticeships, supported internships, or employment. The first Moor House College students have recently attained places at university.

- The curriculum is constantly evolving and improving, including to meet the requirements of new qualifications. There have been strong improvements in science and there are established strengths in art and pottery. Students welcome the wide choice of academic and vocational pathways in the college. However, some pupils feel they do not have enough opportunities to take part in enough extra-curricular sports and clubs.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they develop systems of assessment so that leaders have knowledge about many aspects of pupils' ability, health, well-being and academic progress
- pupils have the opportunity to choose a range of extra-curricular activities that allow them to develop their language skills with peers in a range of informal situations.

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

Lee Selby
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, my colleague and I carried out a series of learning walks where we visited lessons and therapy sessions with senior leaders. We had lunch with pupils in the school and students in the college and spoke to pupils informally around the school. We held meetings with leaders about safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, the curriculum and pupils' outcomes. We attended a staff briefing and met with a group of staff. I met with a group of governors, and held telephone conversations with the leader responsible for your students from Hadlow College and West Kent College and your school improvement partner. My colleague scrutinised documentation relating to safeguarding, including the single central register of recruitment checks, and met with a governor responsible for safeguarding. She also spoke by telephone to a safeguarding consultant who works with the school. We considered 84 responses to the pupil questionnaire, 106 responses to the staff questionnaire, and many responses to Parent View, including 30 free-text comments.