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Mrs Stephanie Coneboy
Headteacher
Fitzwaryn School
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Dear Mrs Coneboy

Short inspection of Fitzwaryn School

Following my visit to the school on 12 March 2019 with Janis Rogers, 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 October 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of outstanding as a result of this inspection.**

You, ably supported by the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher, continue to lead the school with determination and commitment. The culture you have embedded in the school ensures that staff provide high levels of care and support. Pupils continue to do well or very well.

The governing body has a good understanding of its role and actively seeks to contribute to the school's success. Governors know the school well and make visits to monitor progress against the school improvement plan. They are effective in holding you and other leaders to account.

Staff work effectively together to meet the needs of groups and individuals. From the time staff join the school, they are supported well so that they swiftly understand and adhere to your expectations. Staff receive effective training and development that enables them to meet the needs of pupils generally very well. However, occasionally opportunities are missed by teachers and teaching assistants to maximise learning.

Pupils are happy and enjoy school. They are confident in their opinions about school. The pupils we spoke to say there is nothing they do not like about school. When asked what could be even better, one said, 'It is amazing already.'

Parents are extremely positive about the school and say they feel fortunate that their children attend Fitzwaryn School. They are rightly confident that their children are very well looked after and make good progress. Some parents raised concerns about whether the most able pupils receive enough challenge. There is evidence that teachers do extend the learning of these pupils but this is not consistently the case.

The out-reach provision you deliver is very positive and provides opportunities for staff at other schools to benefit from the expertise of your staff. The explicit communication sessions are effective in developing pupils' skills. Pupils from other schools who attend these sessions benefit both from their time in the lessons and from the developing skills of staff from their own schools who accompany them. Communication in other lessons is not quite so consistently well supported. Leaders rightly recognise that some adults need to simplify their vocabulary when speaking to pupils. Some adults communicate at exactly the right level, using a range of words and signs, but this strong practice is not firmly embedded in every class.

You have maintained many of the strengths that were identified at the previous inspection, such as the high-quality training you provide for staff, the strong progress made by pupils and the excellent care pupils receive. However, we identified that there is some inconsistency in routines and the way in which staff communicate with pupils. Although these continue to be very effective in some classes, they are not evident across the school.

Since the previous inspection, robust action has been taken to improve homework. The homework framework is carefully planned to encourage parents in selecting and supporting the right activities for their children. Many of the tasks focus appropriately on development of pupils' personal skills, or encourage pupils to use the practical skills they learn in school.

Over time, pupils make good progress against their individual targets, and some make very good progress. Pupils are encouraged and well supported to achieve qualifications relevant to their specific skills and areas of interest. Leaders work closely with parents to ensure that pupils become as independent as possible in readiness for their adult lives.

Safeguarding is effective.

All staff at the school recognise the particular vulnerabilities of pupils and take safeguarding very seriously. Safer recruitment practices are followed meticulously and the recording of them is managed carefully. Training for staff is timely and appropriate. Staff follow school policies to identify and record any safeguarding concerns. The impending move to an electronic system provides an opportunity for staff to improve their recording of the actions they take. All concerns are followed

up swiftly by leaders. Parents are kept well informed, and outside agencies are involved whenever necessary.

Governors check safeguarding and ensure that school staff and leaders do what they should to keep pupils safe. Parents are rightly confident that the school does what it should to keep their children safe. Pupils learn to keep themselves safe. They are aware of potential hazards on the internet and when meeting strangers, for example. They say that staff take good care of them, and they know who they would talk to if they were worried about anything.

Inspection findings

- We agreed to focus on two specific areas during this short inspection. The first of these was to examine how the curriculum meets pupils' needs. We found that the current curriculum plan meets pupils' needs well. The overview provides a useful framework of topics and themes to be taught in each year group, incorporating appropriate detail about the skills and knowledge which will be developed. Teachers make good use of the autonomy they are given to make minor adaptations to topics, for example by changing planned themes to provide more motivating experiences for pupils. In their quest to improve provision further, leaders have rightly identified the need to refine the curriculum so that from the moment they join the school pupils are working towards fulfilling their potential in their adult lives. Leaders' work to date has been effective in ensuring that all staff are involved in, and excited by, the opportunity to meet pupils' needs even more fully.
- Teachers carefully plan lessons which meet pupils' specific needs, making good use of resources and activities to engage pupils and make learning fun. They correctly evaluate what pupils can already do, and deliver lessons which enable pupils to make the next steps in their learning. In the best lessons, teachers model and develop consistent routines, use of visual aids and clear expectations of use of verbal and non-verbal communication, but this does not happen in all classes. Across the school, the most able pupils continue to make very good progress, but occasionally opportunities are missed to extend these pupils further. Teaching assistants often support learning extremely well, making sure that pupils make very good progress. In many lessons, teaching assistants use their initiative to provide necessary support and adapt tasks as necessary so that pupils who might struggle waste no time. However, some additional adults lack the confidence or skills to provide the same level of effective support.
- The wider curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities meet pupils' needs exceptionally well. The many awards and accolades, such as the most inclusive school award from the Oxford County Music Service and the gold sports mark reflect leaders' ambition and commitment to pupils' high achievements. One parent stated, 'We are so appreciative of the education, experiences and support that Fitzwaryn gives to our son.' The recent introduction of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award is a further example of leaders and teachers' aspirations for pupils. Leaders and teachers actively seek ways to motivate pupils and inspire them to achieve their potential, for example through the 'Philosophy4Children' lessons and by setting up a pupil eco-committee. As a result, pupils develop

confidence in themselves, and many often achieve beyond their, and their parents', expectations.

- The second area we agreed to review in detail was leaders' use of assessment to ensure that pupils make as much progress as they can. Leaders and teachers set appropriate and often ambitious individual targets for pupils. Targets in English and mathematics are established by leaders assessing what pupils should achieve by the time they leave each key stage, taking into account each child's academic potential. School tracking shows that pupils do very well and frequently meet the targets they are set.
- Personal targets, linked to pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans, are appropriately reviewed each half term. Where targets are achieved, teachers set new targets so that, over the course of the year, many pupils fulfil the expectations of their EHC plans. Pupils who are not making the expected progress in any area are supported well to catch up. As a result, pupils make good progress overall, and some excel.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- their work to refine the curriculum is continued so that it meets pupils' needs even more fully
- the most able pupils are consistently challenged to achieve as well as they can in all areas of the curriculum, including English and mathematics
- routines and systems of communication are used across the school and that additional adults consistently promote learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Louise Adams
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we met with you to discuss the school's effectiveness. With leaders, we visited lessons to observe pupils' learning. We met with a group of governors, middle leaders, teachers, support staff and the school council. I spoke to the school improvement partner and the chair of trustees of the Propeller Academy Trust. We gathered views from parents at the beginning of the school day and considered 18 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. We evaluated the

school's safeguarding arrangements and reviewed documentation to evidence the school's effectiveness, including minutes of governors' meetings and records of checks on teaching and learning. We also took account of the 36 responses to the staff survey.