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Ms Lucy Wijsveld
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Wijsveld

Short inspection of Clifton Hill School

Following my visit to the school on 11 June 2019 with Her Majesty's Inspector Sue Bzikot, 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 July 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

You and other leaders continue to provide a friendly, caring and safe environment where pupils work hard and are prepared well for adulthood. Your school values, dedicated to ensuring that pupils achieve their potential, are tangible throughout the school.

Leaders are rightly proud of pupils and staff. You ensure that pupils continue to make good progress in ways which will have a hugely positive impact on their future success and happiness. For example, you have introduced effective new approaches which reduce the anxiety of many pupils and allow them to manage their own behaviour more successfully. During the inspection, the calm way in which pupils actively participated in the school production dress rehearsal was a credit to them and to the whole school.

Collectively, leaders have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. You have worked hard to address successfully the areas for improvement from the last inspection. The promotion of communication is now a real strength of the school and pupils make very strong progress with their reading. Staff are proud to work at your school. They clearly know and understand the pupils and their individual needs very well. Staff are highly skilled, and adults' high levels of commitment and care enable pupils to be as independent as possible, in line with your ambition for them.

Governors are well informed, know the school well and share your determination to improve outcomes for pupils. They confidently offer helpful challenge and support you well in maintaining the good quality of education. Parents and carers are extremely positive about all aspects of the school's work. As one parent stated, 'Clifton Hill knows my child inside and out... the school has enhanced my child's life chances.'

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements in the school are fit for purpose. You and your team have a very clear understanding of how to keep pupils safe. Records of your work in this area are detailed and of high quality. Your effective communication systems, both within school and with outside agencies, ensure that safeguarding concerns are reported quickly and dealt with as soon as possible. Leaders are tenacious in chasing up referrals and external support if necessary. Consequently, pupils are safe and families are well supported.

Strong, trusting relationships between staff and pupils mean that pupils know who to go to if they need help or are worried about anything. The in-depth knowledge that staff have of pupils' medical needs ensures that pupils are well looked after. Pupils are taught well how to manage risks appropriately. They explained to inspectors how the codes on the doors, and reminders such as using seatbelts when out on trips, helped them to feel safe.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we focused on pupils' progress, how well staff promote pupils' communication skills and how well the curriculum prepares pupils for their adult life.
- Pupils make strong progress from their starting points. Leaders ensure that pupils experience carefully designed activities and tailored support in their lessons. As a result, pupils engage well with their learning and develop their knowledge and skills appropriately. You have recently improved the way that you record and track pupils' progress. This is a significant improvement for pupils with complex needs as the new approach allows steps of progress to be identified more precisely than previously, effectively informing future learning. You have rightly identified the need to refine how you assess pupils' progress in English and mathematics to better reflect and promote pupils' learning in basic skills.
- Pupils make particularly strong progress towards their personal targets linked to the school values. They proudly wear their wristbands which remind them of aspirations, for example to be brave and to develop their confidence. Appropriate reward systems encourage and motivate pupils successfully to achieve the best that they can. Rewards match pupils' needs sensitively. For example, those with the most complex needs receive recognition 'in the moment'. For others, the chance to save their rewards over time towards a bigger prize helps them to practise valuable practical money skills.

- Since the last inspection, leaders have successfully improved how communication is taught and developed across the school. For example, you have usefully increased the use of symbols, signing, objects of reference and technological communication aids. Staff use this extensive range of strategies well, supported by effective training from experts beyond the school. Consequently, pupils make strong progress with their communication skills. Pupils are now able to interact more frequently and easily, and the school is a more inclusive environment as a result.
- The curriculum prepares most pupils well for adulthood, promoting communication and independence successfully. Your effective focus on English and mathematical life skills for older pupils offers them invaluable opportunities to practise using these skills in the community where possible. Vocational experiences for the most able students in the sixth form are engaging, varied and appreciated by students. Some of these students talked excitedly about their upcoming residential trip and told us how much they enjoyed their work experience, for example helping in the local supermarket and retirement home. The opportunities and experiences available in the community for sixth-form students with the most complex needs are, however, less well established and rightly a current focus for further development.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- assessments of pupils' progress are refined so that they support teaching, learning and assessment in English and mathematics even better
- experiences for sixth-form students with the most complex needs support them well in preparing for future living.

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

Maxine McDonald-Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you and other leaders to discuss a range of issues, including safeguarding and pupils' progress. We visited lessons together, during which inspectors spoke to pupils. I observed pupils in the playground at lunchtime and both inspectors visited the dress rehearsal of the school performance. We met with

a group of pupils and heard a pupil read. I met with members of the school's governing body and my colleague spoke to a school improvement partner who has recently worked with the school. Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's staff and parent surveys, considered letters from parents and staff and spoke to parents bringing their children to school. Inspectors looked at a range of the school's documentation and a selection of pupils' work.