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Mr Steve Carroll
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Carroll

Short inspection of Mapledown School

Following my visit to the school on 10 July 2018 with Brian Oppenheim, Her Majesty's 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 November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since the last inspection, the school has admitted an increasingly wide and diverse pupil population. You, your governors, leaders and staff have worked with great thought to ensure that the school remains a safe and welcoming environment for all pupils. Pupils in all three 'zones' are making good progress against their learning objectives. The school climate is welcoming, attractive and accessible to all. Pupils' behaviour was excellent in each of the lessons and social times the inspectors visited. The school's work is effective in raising attendance levels, including where pupils' attendance is affected by medical and health issues.

Parents and carers overwhelmingly support the school and believe that it is the best place for their children. Very typical comments from parents included, 'The care and support each child receives is better than I could ever expect or hope for' and 'It's such a happy, caring and fun place to be.' Parents' comments about staff were very positive. One parent said, 'They are truly amazing people, worth their weight in gold.' Many commented on the progress their children had made in communication, independence and mobility skills. The 'movement opportunities via education' (MOVE) programme is very well implemented by the school, and inspection evidence shows that it is having a positive effect on pupils' learning.

Pupils develop valuable skills, for example the fine control of hoists and electric wheelchairs. They relish their increasing independence, moving around the learning

spaces and completing challenging tasks successfully. The school develops pupils' self-confidence well. Pupils were happy to talk with inspectors about the wide range of activities in school and how they had each made personal progress. Older pupils talked with excitement about their transition to college in September. Increasing proportions of pupils with complex needs attend the school. Leaders are rightly reviewing the curriculum to make sure that the school provides for all pupils equally well.

The governing body challenges and supports your team well. You work well with governors, welcoming the commitment, energy and experience of both the longer-term members and those who are relatively new.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Safeguarding and pupils' welfare, physical, mental and emotional needs are firmly at the centre of the school's work. Staff work very well with pupils with learning and physical needs that require high levels of intervention, intimate care and support with their movement. The vulnerability of your pupils and the need to preserve their personal dignity is very well recognised by all staff.

Great efforts are made to ensure that, despite learning or communication difficulties, pupils are taught to keep safe both within and outside school. The curriculum supports safeguarding, covering topics such as 'stranger danger' and 'private personal body areas'. You help pupils to communicate their feelings well, including when they are feeling unhappy, worried or unsafe. Pupils feel safe within school. There is no bullying. Staff are well trained, communication between them is excellent and they support each other well. Staff are alert to, and respond rapidly, calmly and successfully, when pupils need intensive medical support.

Inspection findings

- We agreed to focus on three main aspects of the school's work. These were: safeguarding related to behaviour and bullying; the curriculum and its relationship to outcomes for pupils; and whether teaching, learning and assessment are effective and well monitored and evaluated by leaders.
- Inspectors took account of how well senior leaders monitored, followed up and evaluated incidents of challenging behaviour and bullying. There are few incidents of challenging behaviour. Staff manage, record and analyse well the small number that do occur. Leaders ensure that risk management meetings diagnose patterns and allow strategic support to be put in place, preventing further issues. There are no incidents of bullying.
- Staff use resources and a wide range of activities very effectively to enhance pupils' learning. The outdoor facilities provide a tactile, colourful and sensory learning environment. Staff use this to extend pupils' learning and independence skills, enabling pupils to succeed in problem-solving, and overcoming physical and independence challenges.

- The second area we agreed to look at was the curriculum and its relationship to pupils' outcomes. The current curriculum model has been in place for some years. It develops skills for life and independence. While it is broad and balanced, it is the skill of teachers and support staff that has enabled pupils to achieve well. This is because staff have tailored the curriculum to meet pupils' specific needs.
- For most pupils, the curriculum leads to successful outcomes, increased independence and transition to college and other destinations when they leave school. However, you and your governors recognise that the time is now right for a review of the curriculum so that it better meets the increasingly complex needs of pupils.
- Inspectors looked at whether teachers' expectations were high enough, whether they offer appropriate levels of challenge to pupils and how they take into account pupils' learning needs. We looked at how well leaders monitor and evaluate teaching, learning and assessment.
- The school has addressed the issues from the previous inspection in a robust manner which has had a positive impact. In almost all cases, teachers are now clear about setting appropriate and challenging targets in individual lessons and in being clear about pupils' next steps. We saw, during our visits to lessons, that staff have high expectations of pupils.
- Governors and leaders check and evaluate pupils' targets and their progress towards meeting these. Evidence shows that most pupils make strong progress over time in relation to their key personal learning targets (KPLTs). However, there is some inconsistency in the writing of these. Many targets are sharp and focused, but a small number are less so. Leaders' monitoring of pupils' progress targets at annual reviews is not consistently robust.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they review the curriculum to ensure that it reflects the needs of the school's changing and increasingly varied and complex admissions, and enables all pupils to make strong progress throughout the curriculum
- governors and leaders take further steps to make sure that targets and progress expectations set for pupils are rigorous and ensure best progression for all pupils in the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Derek Kitchin
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we met with you, senior leaders and administrative staff. We conducted learning walks with you and senior leaders, visiting all key stages. We spoke to teaching and support staff and discussed safeguarding, the curriculum and the objectives and outcomes of their teaching, learning and assessment. We spoke to pupils that were able to communicate with us, to parents and to transport drivers and escort staff. Five members of the governing body met with us. Telephone calls were made to two senior members of the local authority. We considered the 13 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the accompanying free-text comments.

We looked at a range of school documentation, which included the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan, an external evaluation of the school from the school improvement associate, governing body minutes, safeguarding referrals and records, policies and other information on the school website. We looked at the single central record of your recruitment checks of staff. We reviewed with you pupils' attendance and performance information, and looked at case studies and annual review documentation.