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Mrs Andrea Ashton-Coulton  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Ashton-Coulton

### **Short inspection of Woodfield School**

Following my visit to your school on 4 October 2016, 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 2012.

### **This school continues to be good.**

Leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Despite only being in post for a month, you have already adroitly articulated your vision for the school that all pupils can 'fully access life and be active participants in their futures'. In your short time in school, you have built on the good work of current and past leaders to inspire your staff and pupils to do their best. Your high expectations are reflected across the school with leaders, teachers and pupils aiming to exceed expectations. Consequently, parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school, describing how the pupils are 'transformed' and reporting that 'it is a little school with a big heart'.

Since your appointment you have reviewed all aspects of the school. Staff and leaders appreciate how you listen to their suggestions to further refine strategies that worked well in the past. You stringently evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the school and you have successfully prioritised the areas that require further attention. As a result, there are already new approaches in place to ensure that teachers are effectively meeting the increasingly complex needs of pupils now starting at the school. The support and care for all pupils, especially those with complex needs, is exemplary because you and your leaders are passionate about this aspect of your work.

You work particularly closely with the SE7 partnership, a local collaboration of special schools. You and your leaders have used this partnership effectively to check that your moderation and assessment of pupils' work is accurate, as well as to support staff with additional training. You are well advised by the local authority, who support you when appropriate. The local authority also ensured that, on the retirement of the previous headteacher, there was strong leadership in place during the interregnum period. The school has developed a strong partnership with parents through the 'Friends of Woodfield School'. As a result, parents are keen to raise funds and support the school in the many events you organise.

Following your appointment, you have continued to promote collaborative working across the school. You and your leaders continue with the previously successful practice of regularly sharing critical information and useful strategies to ensure that all teachers know what works best. A highlight of this is your daily briefing, where all staff learn the 'sign of the day' to support those pupils with hearing impairments. All staff report that they are well supported and fairly treated. There are good systems in place to reward teachers' performance and leaders use these well to challenge staff to do their best. As a result, staff report that they are proud to work in the school and that they are united as a team.

You have effectively addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. You have introduced a new approach to assessment, which teachers are using skilfully. In addition, you and your leaders have developed a broad range of courses that give pupils useful qualifications and enable you to compare their progress more closely with other similar pupils nationally. Middle leaders are also increasingly effective and, following recent changes, there is considerable evidence of leaders working well to continue to raise standards of teaching, learning and assessment. This is especially the case in mathematics and in the sixth form. However, a few subject leaders are very new to post and have not had time to make as much impact yet.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding policies and procedures are thorough and rigorous. Leaders maintain well-ordered records which are shared appropriately with the relevant agencies. Training for staff is of a high quality and governors regularly review the checks made on the recruitment of staff new to the school. Leaders are not complacent and have reacted nimbly to new risks such as sexting and social media, by ensuring that every subject in the curriculum gives pupils useful guidance on staying out of harm's way. As a result, pupils say they are safe and well looked after. They are also very confident that any worries they have will be taken seriously and followed up by all staff.

## Inspection findings

- You have got to know the school well in a short space of time so you have accurately identified the areas that require further attention. You have rightly focused on tightening up the school's procedures to manage challenging behaviour. As a result, staff feel well supported when supporting new pupils whose emotional needs are more demanding than previous cohorts.
- Governors exercise their duties well. They understand the changing context of the intake of the school and are supporting you in taking the right steps to address this. Governors are knowledgeable about the new assessment system and are now very confident in overseeing the standards of all groups of pupils at the school. Governors can also convincingly discuss how well the funding for disadvantaged pupils is used.
- Pupils in 2016 made more progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics than similar pupils nationally. Pupils' progress and achievement in mathematics is particularly impressive with more pupils than previously achieving entry level, functional skills level one and GCSE qualifications.
- You recognise that the progress of pupils in writing could be improved still further. In 2016, a few pupils did not make as much progress as leaders expected because they are less confident about acting on the guidance they receive from teachers. However, more pupils gained the entry level three qualification in English than before and current information shows that this trend is set to continue.
- Almost all pupils remain in education or in employment at the end of key stage 4 and key stage 5. Pupils receive very good support and guidance to follow their interests and find further courses that will help them live fuller lives in the future. Those very few pupils who did not continue in education after key stage 5 continue to receive good support, because leaders have strong links with agencies in adult social care.
- In 2016 pupils achieved high grades in their GCSE art exams. This is a good example of the high aspirations of staff, who nurture the talents that pupils have. Pupils described how staff had used their own time to support them in gaining an additional qualification or learning a new skill.
- All pupils read regularly and often. Reading achievement information shows that the majority of pupils make good progress and that the school's schemes underpin this. However, a few pupils are not reading widely enough and they find the choice of books limiting.
- Disadvantaged pupils do well in mathematics and English because they achieve at least the same standards as other pupils in the school and with other similar pupils nationally. Indeed, in some case these pupils are out-performing their peers because you use the additional funding very effectively. However, a few disadvantaged pupils are making less progress in science because they are withdrawn to receive extra support and intervention during these lessons. You are now working with all staff to

improve the quality of support for these pupils so that they can catch up.

- Teaching across the school has many strengths. Teachers know their pupils well and use good subject knowledge to carefully plan activities that pupils find interesting. Teachers also use questioning well to challenge misconceptions and ensure that pupils have a good grasp of key concepts. Pupils make good progress in lessons because teachers are flexible in their approach and strive to overcome the different barrier each pupil faces.
- The curriculum is well developed and has an appropriate balance between covering life skills and more academic subjects. Pupils enjoy learning about the wider world in school and on the many trips and visits. They also appreciate learning life skills that ensure they are more independent. This is especially the case in the 16 to 19 provision, where pupils take part in a residential week.
- Pupils want to succeed. They know when they have done well and what additional work they need to do to improve. They take pride in their work, write neatly in their books and are confident in explaining the progress they have made.
- Pupils are very proud of their school and their achievements. They are keen to share their views. Pupils can take on leadership roles as part of the student council and pupils of all ages get on well. Older pupils also take part in a regional dance competition that involves pupils from both special and mainstream schools.
- The overall attendance of pupils is currently above the national average for special schools. A very few pupils continue to attend less well, despite the wide range of support put in place by leaders, who are also tenacious in following up referrals made to the local authority and other services.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the work of the school. There are good systems in place to regularly inform them of pupils' progress and they feel that any concerns are swiftly dealt with. They report that parents are 'always welcome' and that the systems in place to support pupils transferring from other schools are very effective.
- Behaviour around the school is very good. Pupils listen well to each other and to adults. They follow the school's procedures well, moving calmly around the building between lessons. At lunchtime, pupils and staff sit together, enjoying their free time as well as catching up on the events of the day.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- further refine teachers' guidance to pupils on what their next steps should be, especially within writing, so that pupils consistently understand how to move on
- make sure that the few pupils who receive additional intervention have further opportunities to catch up on work missed, including in science.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for Surrey County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Seamus Murphy  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Two inspectors visited the school for one day. There were meetings with you, your leaders, staff and governors as well as a phone call with a representative of the local authority. The 19 responses to the staff survey were also considered. Policies around safeguarding, your own analyses of pupils' achievement and other documents were scrutinised. The inspectors visited all year groups to see teaching and learning. There were formal and informal meetings with pupils, as well as inspectors listening to a range of pupils read. The inspectors also looked at pupils' work in lessons and with leaders, in particular English books from key stage 4. The 18 responses to Parent View were analysed as well as taking into account the views of parents who spoke to the inspector on the telephone at the end of the school day.