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Nathan Aspinall  
Headteacher  
The Abbey School  
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Surrey  
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Dear Mr Aspinall

### **Short inspection of The Abbey School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 June 2016 with Jo Jones, 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 July 2012.

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

You and your leadership team have maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Together you have established a pupil-centred culture, which underpins the vision to, 'build pupils' confidence for tomorrow'. Both you and the deputy headteacher have joined the school since the last inspection. Together you have built on the many strengths of the school.

Leaders, including governors, ensure that all those who work at the school have the highest expectations for pupils. Staff work cohesively and successfully under your leadership to help prepare the pupils for their next stage of education, employment or training.

The work of leaders to tackle the area for improvement given at the previous inspection is a good example of how you have built on the excellent work of leaders before you. Pupils have individualised targets based on their specific needs which they take with them to all lessons. They are very clear about what their targets are and why they have them, because they have been involved in putting them together. Teachers frequently refer to pupils' targets in lessons so that rapid progress is made.

You and your leadership team have built successfully on the target-setting system by devising an excellent system to measure pupils' progress, which takes account of recent changes in national curriculum levels. Teachers are rightly confident that it supports them to plan lessons to help pupils make even faster progress. You have

correctly identified that this new system needs time to embed and could be used to measure progress across a wider range of subjects than at present, as well as pupils' personal and social development.

The checks that you and other leaders undertake to judge the quality of learning at the school are excellent and wide-ranging. You sensibly take into account pupils' views of their work, as well as looking at learning for yourself in lessons. Assessment information is used very effectively to back up what you learn from other activities. Consequently, leaders' evaluations are accurate.

You use these evaluations well to plan further improvements. For example, you have already increased the involvement of parents in their children's learning, having listened carefully to the views of parents when you arrived as headteacher. Parents are overwhelming positive about their experience of the school. They rightly recognise the positive impact you have made and how this has built on the many things they already liked about the school. The robustness of your plans for improvement can be seen in the impact that has already been made. For example, the curriculum is improving further and pupils' outcomes are going from strength to strength.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment are superb. Lessons closely meet the individual needs of pupils. Teachers use a range of well-honed skills to help pupils deepen their understanding of new concepts and skills. For example, teachers' very effective use of questioning ensures that pupils think deeply for themselves and rapidly develop skills of independence as they go through the school.

### **Safeguarding is very effective.**

The deputy headteacher is the designated safeguarding lead. He has ensured that all staff, including those who are non-teaching, benefit from appropriate and well-planned training. This includes 'hot topic' meetings where crucial areas of safeguarding are discussed in relation to the specific needs of pupils at the school, such as e-safety. Consequently, staff are very effective in fulfilling the requirements of the school's safeguarding policies, which make full reference to the latest statutory guidance.

The school business manager, supported well by other leaders, ensures that safer recruitment processes are very effective. All required checks are carried out and recorded appropriately on a central register.

Pupils and parents report unreservedly that they believe that pupils are safe. There is an open and sharing culture, which means that concerns are communicated in a timely manner. Work with other agencies is very effective. Opportunities in the curriculum to develop pupils' self-awareness, such as how to keep themselves safe when on the internet, are very well utilised. Leaders rightly focus on ensuring that pupils develop these skills, because of their particular vulnerabilities. Consequently, pupils are very aware of what they need to do to be safe and who to go to if they are concerned.

## Inspection findings

- The leadership and management of the school continue to be of the highest quality. Leaders are exceptionally clear about what the strengths and weaknesses of the school are, because their monitoring is robust and effective. Consequently, plans for improvement are sharp and make a difference. Provision continues to improve.
- The curriculum meets the needs of pupils exceptionally well. Leaders ensure that pupils benefit from personalised curriculums. Pupils make rapid and sustained progress in a wide range of areas, and particularly in art, English and science. Wider opportunities are drawn into the curriculum, which broaden and enthuse pupils in their learning. For example, during the inspection, pupils were given the opportunity to work with an artist in residence to learn new skills and produce felt collages. The work that pupils produced was of an exceptionally high level.
- Although the quality of the school's provision is very high, leaders have extended and improved provision further. For example, the addition of outdoor learning experiences, such as in horticulture, and the broadening of options in the creative subjects have helped pupils across the school to explore potential career pathways. All pupils who left the school in 2015 have sustained their placements in the next stage of their education.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Parents report unanimously about the difference the school has made to their children's ability to make and sustain friendships. Pupils report very positively about their experiences of the curriculum and how it has helped them prepare for life in modern Britain. They learn about different cultures across a range of subjects, such as in a key stage 3 art project about the native Americans and an ethnic minority history study week. Pupils are aware of British values and the importance of democracy. The value of equality and diversity runs strongly through the ethos of the school. This was very well demonstrated in the discussions and experiences of pupils in their preparation for a mock referendum vote as to whether Britain should remain in the European Union.
- Governors are highly effective. They hold leaders rigorously to account. They do this by asking pertinent and challenging questions in meetings and by visiting the school to find out how well new initiatives are going. This also means governors are very clear about how well pupils are doing. They make very good use of the information they receive from leaders. They have a particularly strong overview of safeguarding.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment remains outstanding. Teachers plan focused lessons that provide for pupils' specific learning needs and individual targets. Teachers know the pupils they teach exceptionally well because their use of assessment is excellent. Strong and valued relationships are established successfully with pupils, who want to do well for their teachers.
- Teachers' planning is carefully focused on the different needs of pupils with differing abilities. Planning clearly signposts how teaching assistants are to be utilised in lessons. This, with the effective use of assessment, means that

almost all lessons support pupils of differing abilities to make rapid and sustained progress, so learning over time is very good.

- Other adults are deployed extremely well to support learning in lessons. Together with the teachers, teaching assistants regularly help record assessment information which is used to amend tasks in lessons so that pupils consistently make rapid and sustained progress.
- Pupils' individual targets are used exceptionally well. The targets they are given are focused on developing stronger attitudes, such as resilience, as well as skills of independence and academic progress. Pupils take ownership towards meeting their targets because of how well they have been involved from the start. Consequently, pupils have very good attitudes to their learning. They strive to be as independent as they can be and are keen to be successful.
- The pupils truly are 'advocates' of the school. They conduct themselves in an exemplary manner. All staff focus on promoting pupils' self-confidence. Pupils are given regular opportunities to have responsibility and leadership in and around the curriculum. They make a contribution to the calm, cohesive and purposeful atmosphere at the school. Consequently, the school is a harmonious community where pupils behave and attend well and exclusions are exceptionally rare.
- Assessment information demonstrates that pupils make rapid and sustained progress from their starting points. This is particularly the case in English and mathematics, but also in their personal and social development.
- Consultants from Babcock 4S, who provide school improvement services for the local authority, rightly provide light-touch support for this very effective school.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the assessment system is embedded further so that it continues to secure outstanding teaching and learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Matthew Barnes  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors met with you, the deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, four governors and a group of pupils. I had a telephone conversation with a representative from Babcock 4S, who provide school improvement services for

Surrey local authority. Inspectors visited a number of lessons, most of which were accompanied by a member of the senior leadership team, to observe teaching and look at work in pupils' books. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in a range of situations, including lessons, lunchtime and in the playground. We considered the responses of 61 parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as 19 responses to the staff questionnaire. Inspectors analysed a range of documentation, including reports provided by the local authority, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, information about pupils' progress and safeguarding documentation.