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Mrs Yvonne Weatherhead  
Headteacher  
Northgate School  
Edgware Community Hospital  
Burnt Oak Broadway  
Edgware  
Middlesex  
HA8 0AD

Dear Mrs Weatherhead

### **Short inspection of Northgate School**

Following my visit to the school on 31 January 2018 with Mary Geddes, 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 May 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the previous inspection.

Since taking up your appointment as headteacher in January 2016, you have built on the strengths of the school identified at the previous inspection. You and your staff provide a warm and safe environment for pupils who are experiencing serious mental health difficulties; these are some of the most vulnerable pupils in society. All pupils are receiving treatment in hospital or through the child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). Pupils stay in the school for periods of time, often only from one to three months but with some staying much longer. Turnover of pupils throughout the year is high. The school has the capacity for 28 pupils, but during the course of the last academic year, around 60 pupils attended for different periods of time.

Since your appointment, you have successfully introduced a number of measures to improve provision, teaching and pupils' outcomes and behaviour. These have included effective systems to monitor and evaluate teaching and the pupils' performance, including their attendance. You have reorganised leadership responsibilities, broadened the curriculum and strengthened communication with health professionals, parents and carers. Above all, you have raised the expectations of staff about what pupils can and should be achieving. You have done this by promoting a culture of excellence whereby pupils are helped to succeed academically. You and your staff are unwavering in the belief that Northgate pupils

should achieve as well as those pupils who attend mainstream schooling.

Pupils and parents value greatly the care and education that the school provides. Many parents reported that attending Northgate has changed the course of their children's lives. When they join the school, many pupils have missed long periods of their education. Some do not feel well enough to attend school or are nervous and reluctant to join lessons. Staff are very skilled at helping pupils to engage with learning.

Members of the management committee bring considerable experience and expertise. They very much value your clarity of thought, your effectiveness in managing staff and your very humane leadership style. They also value the way you challenge yourself and others in continually striving to improve the school. Together, you have ensured that the single area for improvement identified at the previous inspection, concerning the school's website, has been rectified.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and the members of the management committee have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Excellent channels of communication exist between the hospital's staff and your colleagues. The handovers between staff groups at the beginning of each school day ensure that all relevant information regarding pupils' health and treatment plans is shared. You and your staff have established a strong culture of safeguarding and vigilance in which the safety of pupils is paramount.

Staff are acutely aware of the dangers of child sexual exploitation, gang culture, extremism and online safety. They help pupils to manage the risks they sometimes find themselves facing outside school. Pupils feel safe at school and are comfortable in confiding in adults there when they are worried or anxious. Staff work very effectively in partnership with external agencies, including health professionals, to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families receive the help and support that they need.

### **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection, we agreed to look at: pupils' progress; the impact of changes to the curriculum; and how well pupils attend school.
- We first looked at pupils' progress because there is no published achievement data for schools catering for pupils with similar needs to those of your pupils against which the school's performance can be compared.
- Since the previous inspection, pupils' progress has improved markedly, particularly in academic subjects, because of better teaching and curricular provision. The school's information for 2017 shows that, overall, pupils made excellent progress across a range of subjects. For pupils currently on roll, the school's data, visits to classrooms and scrutiny of pupils' work show that pupils make great strides in their learning, particularly in English, mathematics and science. Pupils make particularly strong gains in reading. The school provided

data relating to pupils who had been at the school for a year or more; this showed that their reading age had improved dramatically from being two years below their chronological age to being only two months below their chronological age. The longer pupils remain in the school, the stronger their progress becomes. Pupils also achieve well in a range of other subjects, particularly in art, general studies and cookery. However, we agreed that teachers need to provide pupils with more opportunities to write at length, across a range of genres, to enable them to achieve even higher standards.

- In 2017, almost all pupils achieved GCSE, A-level or work-related qualifications. In GCSE examinations, almost two-thirds of pupils achieved either grade 4 or C in four or more subjects. This represents a significant improvement on the previous year's results. During 2016/17, all pupils were successfully reintegrated back into their mainstream schools, new mainstream settings, alternative provision or college.
- We then looked at how effective the curriculum is in meeting pupils' diverse needs. This was to evaluate the impact of the significant changes made to the curriculum since you joined the school. These changes include: increasing the amount of curriculum time that hospital pupils receive; increasing the range of academic subjects taught; and expanding the enrichment activities programme.
- The stimulating and well-considered curriculum is responsive to the needs of the constantly changing pupil population. It provides an abundance of opportunities to develop pupils' skills in communication, literacy and numeracy. Recently introduced subjects include general studies, information and communication technology, equine studies, and the tutorial and life skills programmes. These courses are having a highly positive effect on pupils' personal development and academic progress. Additionally, the appointment of specialist tutors enables pupils to study interesting subjects, including animation, drumming, sculpture and textiles. You and your staff are highly skilled at linking the planned curriculum to the therapeutic needs of the pupils. Pupils enjoy visits to the theatre, places of worship and sports venues, as well as activities that include 'sleep-overs'. These experiences help pupils to confront their own fears, develop their social skills, improve their confidence and self-esteem and become more independent.
- All pupils receive effective careers advice and attend work experience placements. These help them to make informed choices about their future routes into further education or employment with training. As a result, in 2017, all eligible pupils continued their studies in further education or work placements.
- Finally, we looked at pupils' attendance. Leaders work very effectively with families to ensure that pupils attend regularly. In 2017, there was very little variation in rates of attendance for different groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. Attendance improves dramatically the longer pupils remain in the school and is significantly better than it was in their mainstream schools. Parents are very appreciative of the school's efforts to help their children attend regularly, and of its work in general.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in longer pieces of work, in different subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

David Scott  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

The inspectors carried out the following activities during the inspection:

- meetings with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, staff and a health worker
- telephone conversations with the chair of the management committee and a representative from the local authority
- joint visits to classrooms with the headteacher
- scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils
- informal discussions with parents at the end of the school day
- analysis of parental responses to the school's own surveys
- 11 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, and seven text responses
- a scrutiny of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, development plans, safeguarding information and records, and data on pupils' achievement and attendance
- a review of the school's website.