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Mrs Leigh Edser  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Edser

### **Short inspection of Dysart School**

Following my visit to the school on 13 November 2018 with Jan Keating, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be outstanding in September 2015.

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

In April 2016 Dysart converted to an academy. Since then, you have implemented a number of significant developments, including introducing a new curriculum. You are rightly proud of your work around pupil well-being, and ensuring that pupils are ready for learning. This has enabled you to establish a calm and purposeful learning environment for pupils with considerable needs. It is evident that for many staff and pupils, Dysart is a very happy place to be. Expectations are high, and everyone shares your commitment to achieving the best outcomes for every pupil. One parent told me that your level of challenge has even raised her expectations for her own child.

Governors demonstrate a strong drive for improvement and are keen that the school constantly evolves and adapts. They fully understand the life of the school, and fully support the staff at Dysart. They are well placed to hold leaders to account because they have a wealth of relevant experience. Every opportunity is taken to test out what leaders tell them, including regular visits to lessons and scrutiny of key documents. Not only do they provide challenge for leaders, but they also hold one another to account. For example, on 'away days' they discuss how challenging each other's questions have been in previous meetings.

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

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Staff training is thorough and

regular, and responds well to local and individual pupil needs. Consequently, staff are skilled in keeping pupils safe, including when behaviour is challenging.

Leaders demonstrate a high level of understanding and awareness of safeguarding concerns. They hold fortnightly meetings with relevant staff to ensure that every pupil's safety is routinely considered. The families that I spoke to reported that this is a safe place to be, and that staff at your school genuinely care about everyone in the school community. One parent I spoke to told me that leaders see 'beyond the diagnosis' and have taken the time to really get to know her child.

Pupils are equipped with the language to express any worries they may have. Those who use alternative means of communication are taught how to use the vocabulary they need to keep themselves safe. One parent of a non-verbal child said, 'I feel totally secure in the knowledge that he is safe here, even though he can't talk.'

### **Inspection findings**

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed the key lines of enquiry. This inspection focused on the impact of leaders' actions, particularly on maintaining the high standard of teaching. I also looked at how leaders use assessment information to ensure that pupils make strong progress. Next, I considered how effectively leaders address behaviour and communication to ensure that pupils make the most of their time with you. Lastly, I focused on how well the curriculum supports pupils to achieve well.
- Leaders at all levels play a role in ensuring that pupils have the very best opportunities in lessons. Teaching is engaging and creative, and additional adults are skilfully deployed. As a result, almost all of the pupils we saw in lessons were focused and engaged in their learning.
- The expertise of the multi-disciplinary team has been effectively shared with staff so that they can better support pupils' learning. There is a strong emphasis on preparing pupils to learn. Consequently, staff provide a calm and nurturing learning environment, in which pupils' individual needs are paramount. Relationships are warm, and staff are skilled in settling pupils and supporting them to access the curriculum.
- Pupils make exceptional progress in English and mathematics because staff work alongside leaders, parents and therapists to agree goals. In addition, a significant number of pupils meet or exceed the targets set at education, health and care plan review meetings. Intended outcomes are clearly displayed in classrooms, and progress is carefully tracked using a new online system. Parents and carers contribute to the evaluation of progress during termly meetings, and plans are in place for them to access the online system. The parents I spoke to said they felt well informed about their child's progress. This includes effective use of the home school book, a messaging group, a communication app, and review meetings.
- Where leaders identify small gaps in achievement, they respond swiftly to put plans in place to secure improvements. This happened last year with key stage 4 pupils following a move into the new building. In response, leaders now provide earlier opportunities for pupils to experience what their new class will be like.

They also worked to ensure that key stage 4 and 5 accredited courses were more relevant and as a result you saw a 100% increase in results.

- The school's approach to supporting pupils' behaviour is a strength of the school. The majority of pupils' learning behaviour is exemplary given their needs. Pupils are afforded the freedom to develop independence within a structure that prevents them from being overwhelmed. This is true within lessons and around the school. Because behaviour incidents are carefully tracked and analysed, there has been a reduction in the frequency and severity of incidents. Leaders are proactive in identifying pupils at risk and target support accordingly. The staff I spoke to told me that they feel well supported by leaders when dealing with behaviour. In turn, pupils are well supported by highly skilled adults, who focus on prevention. Staff clearly benefit from regular training that is designed to effectively meet the pupils' complex needs. You do not take the views of other professionals for granted, and try to get to the heart of pupils' challenging behaviours. Consequently, more pupils are now able to self-regulate their behaviour, and to develop positive relationships with other pupils. A particular success was when one pupil was able to express his feelings by saying 'I'm jealous' rather than get distressed after seeing a friend play football with someone else.
- Non-verbal pupils develop their independence because there is universal use of symbol support to help them to understand and communicate. They are also taught to express feelings. Where pupils are experiencing emotional difficulties, they are supported through drama, music and art lessons to manage their emotions. This results in reduced levels of anxiety among those with the most complex needs.
- The recently introduced 'Rainbow' curriculum is highly responsive to pupils' individual needs. It has been carefully constructed, taking into account the views of pupils and families. There is a strong focus on preparing all of your pupils for the move towards adulthood. Another important element of your curriculum is helping every pupil leave with a voice that can be heard. Leaders are clear about the intent of the curriculum, and its three pathways are well understood by staff and governors. Parents feel that it is really tailored to meet the needs of their own child. Teachers told me they feel empowered by the new curriculum. They are clear about how pupils are progressing because it is well matched to individual need and builds on prior learning. You are now working to further develop this curriculum so that it better prepares the older pupils for the next stage of their education.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the impressive work on the curriculum extends into key stages 4 and 5, incorporating current accreditation opportunities.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Kingston upon Thames. This

letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Francis McDonald-Gonzalez  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, the inspection team held a number of meetings with you and other senior leaders. You accompanied the team inspector on a series of short visits to lessons. The inspection team held discussions with different leaders about safeguarding, the curriculum, removing barriers to learning, and measuring pupil progress. Meetings were held with the vice-chair of governors and three other governors, middle leaders, and with other professionals. I also spoke to a group of parents. The inspection team worked with senior leaders to scrutinise information on pupils' progress, attendance, behaviour incidents, and evidence of records to keep pupils safe. Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys, including 15 responses from parents and 20 staff responses.