

22 January 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

In November 2017, HM Inspectors published a letter on Stanmore House School. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and a representative from the Board of Trustees. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to children and young people and worked closely with the executive headteacher and staff. We heard from the executive headteacher and other staff about the steps the school has taken to improve. We looked at particular areas that had been identified in the original inspection in bold text below. As a result, we were able to find out about the progress the school has made and how well this is supporting children's and young people's learning and achievements. This letter sets out what we found.

The Board of Trustees and recently appointed senior leaders should ensure that all staff, placing authorities, partners and parents understand and share its vision for collaborative approaches to education and therapy and promoting social inclusion within a nurturing environment.

The Board of Trustees and senior leaders have made significant progress in ensuring that staff, partners and parents understand and share its vision. As a result of wide-ranging consultation with care and education staff and allied health professionals through vision and values workshops, all staff now work collaboratively to provide a happy, safe, nurturing and fun environment. Staff feel valued and respected and all children and young people are encouraged to achieve their potential. The school should, as planned, share its vision more widely with external partners including placing authorities.

All staff commented that collaborative approaches between education, care and therapy staff are now fully embedded in the culture of the service. Health professionals understand more clearly what progress in learning looks like and teachers and support staff can observe health professionals modelling approaches to meeting learners' health needs in the classroom. As a result of these shared approaches, children and young people are making notable progress in their learning. Senior leaders are keen to build on this success by creating opportunities for staff to work collaboratively on self-evaluation and the development of the school improvement plan.

The Board of Trustees needs to ensure further clarity around the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders within the school. In particular, they need to improve the arrangements for managing child protection and safeguarding across the school and residences and ensure that these are well understood by all staff and partners.

Staff now have a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The newly appointed executive headteacher is working very well with staff to develop a clear vision for change and improvement. The deputy head teacher continues to provide effective management and leadership of the school. She is leading improvement priorities and since the previous inspection, she has worked very effectively with staff and other agencies to progress actions. Across the school, staff have a better understanding of safeguarding procedures and their responsibilities for ensuring the wellbeing and safety of children and young people. All staff

have participated in child protection training. The senior leadership team, together with the Board of Trustees, have developed better approaches to ensuring wellbeing concerns are discussed and addressed at senior leadership meetings. Significant concerns are submitted to the Director of Services and Development to ensure the Board of Trustees are aware of all issues. Staff should continue to work collaboratively across the school and bungalows and with partners to maintain the improved focus on safeguarding.

Build on current strengths to ensure more consistent high quality learning and teaching across the school and provide regular opportunities for sharing best practice.

Senior leaders and staff have undertaken considerable work to ensure more consistent, high quality learning and teaching across the school. Teachers are now clearer about what high quality learning and teaching looks like through significantly increased opportunities for professional learning and peer observation. Teachers meet regularly with colleagues and receive helpful feedback about the quality of their teaching. More consistent approaches to learning and teaching are helping learners to settle quickly and focus on learning tasks. These approaches include the use of visual timetables to describe the day's activities, well-structured lessons and clearer individualised learning targets well-matched to children's and young people's different needs. At the secondary and senior phase, there is a clearer focus on developing important skills for life and becoming independent.

All staff consistently use a rich range of communication aids to help children and young people to be more active in their learning. They use symbols, pictures, signing, interactive technology and real objects to support learner's understanding of tasks and help them to communicate their responses. Young people are encouraged to familiarise themselves with new technology which enhances their communication. They sign well and use switches, pictures and symbols to indicate choices and preferences. Staff use the environment for learning across the school to further support children's communication. The school has been particularly successful in developing very effective partnerships within the local community with mutual benefits to the community and for children and young people at the school. The school should continue to develop its approaches to involving parents in supporting their children's learning and communicating with them about their children's progress in learning.

Further develop more robust approaches to planning, assessment and tracking of children's and young people's progress in learning.

Teachers currently plan learning using short and long term planning approaches. A range of documentation is now in place to support planning. The senior leadership team, together with staff, are developing new approaches which aim to provide a more consistent approach to planning across all classes. Professional learning related to learning, teaching and assessment has resulted in a shared understanding across the school about assessment approaches. Staff have developed clear approaches to assessment and adopted a range of ways in which learners' progress and achievement is assessed and recorded. Senior leaders are aware of the need to evaluate the impact of any new approaches to planning, tracking and monitoring to ensure they are not overly bureaucratic and they lead to improved outcomes for children and young people. Staff should continue to develop a shared understanding of assessment and expected standards. New approaches to tracking and

monitoring progress should take appropriate account of the individual needs of children and young people.

What happens next?

The school has made very good progress since the original inspection. We are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. The Board of Trustees will inform parents about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Dr Kate Hannah
HM Inspector