

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Ms Patricia Pearson
Headteacher
Beechcliffe Special School
Green Head Road
Utley
Keighley
West Yorkshire
BD20 6ED

Dear Ms Patricia Pearson

Short inspection of Beechcliffe Special School

Following my visit to the school on 19 April 2016 with Jen Cave, 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 good in May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You, other leaders and governors have taken every opportunity to develop the staff team, including appointing new leaders and teachers. As a result, the team successfully responds to the changing needs of pupils, new expectations about pupils' achievements and how they are assessed. Throughout, you have maintained the school's core values that pupils should be 'joyful learners'.

It is clear to everyone visiting the school, including parents, that the pupils are not only happy but are keen to learn. Your relentless focus on making sure that all pupils make at least good progress in reading, writing and mathematics has not reduced the breadth of subjects pupils enjoy or the successful development of their personal and independence skills. Performing and visual arts are strong features of the school. The opportunities these subjects provide are making a significant contribution to the pupils' confidence, resilience and joy for life.

Areas identified for development in the previous inspection have been successfully addressed. Your monitoring records and records of pupils' progress over time demonstrate that teaching, learning and assessment continue to improve. You and the newly extended leadership team accurately judge what further developments are required. The actions you and your leadership team take are effective. The work to develop pupils' use of mathematical skills is particularly striking. For example,

mathematics challenges displayed in corridors make mathematical reasoning part of everyday life.

Teaching assistants are used effectively to support individual pupils and to work with groups of pupils. The current priority of extending the range of different ways in which staff communicate with pupils is reaping rewards, particularly in the use of objects and pictures to help pupils choose activities for themselves.

The newly extended leadership team means that more teachers are directly involved in planning further developments. Team members appreciate the beneficial leadership training they receive. They feel more confident in holding other teachers to account for the progress pupils make in the areas they lead. They are also involved in providing direct support to teachers and other staff to ensure that your appropriately high standards are consistently maintained.

Developments in post-16 provision have been noticeable. All learners now achieve success in appropriate qualifications, work experience and a wide range of personal development opportunities. The latter include chances to take part in the National Citizens Award Scheme. Individual programmes focus on learners' aspirations for their future. These are backed up by appropriate advice and guidance for their next steps and involve a range of other agencies.

Safeguarding is effective.

The extent to which you and the leadership team focus on the safety and well-being of pupils is commendable. You make sure that all appropriate checks are in place before staff start work at the school. You ensure that staff training is properly implemented. Staff know what to do if they have concerns about pupils or about other members of staff. Records show that your work with other agencies is robust. You are not afraid to persist in referring pupils to agencies when you think extra help is needed to keep pupils safe.

Pupils feel safe. They indicate this through what they say and in how they communicate their confidence in staff. This is evident when observing the interactions between pupils with very complex needs and staff who meet their personal care needs. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. The relationships and sex education (RSE) programme is clear and appropriate, and covers a range of different types of relationship. Pupils are learning to safely manage risks associated with daily living, including online safety. Importantly, staff work with parents to encourage them to let their children enjoy being independent. Parents appreciate this support in 'letting go' of their vulnerable children.

Inspection findings

- Effective teaching in a range of subjects in all year groups leads to pupils making good progress. The records of pupils' progress over the last two years show that a good proportion make more than expected progress from their starting points in communication skills, reading, writing, mathematics and in their personal development.

- Underpinning effective teaching is thorough and accurate assessment. This is an area you continue to develop as you are determined to make sure that all teachers and teaching assistants use the developing assessment system to support even more tightly focused teaching.
- Attendance is just below the average for mainstream secondary schools. Leaders work relentlessly with parents and pupils to improve attendance. This is successful for some pupils. Leaders take formal action when appropriate. They also demonstrate sensitive support to pupils whose absence is due to medical issues relating to their disability.
- The strengths identified in pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare have been maintained since the previous inspection. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally strong. The wide range of activities, with appropriate and often very discrete support, ensures that pupils are keen to learn and resilient, and mature into good citizens of Britain.
- Pupils make good progress as a result of good teaching. Leaders check progress and dig into the information to make sure it is accurate and to work out what more they can do to increase the rate of progress further.
- As a result of recent increases in the rate of progress and the pupils' changing needs, many pupils are showing the potential to succeed in entry-level qualifications at the end of Year 11 as well as in post-16. Leaders agree that providing opportunities for pupils' achievements to be recognised by external examinations in Year 11 is a next step.
- Leaders track the progress of individual pupils and different groups of pupils. The information shows that any gaps in pupils' progress are linked to individual circumstances rather than linked to a specific group. For example, disadvantaged pupils make expected or more than expected progress in the same way as other pupils.
- The broad and balanced range of subjects is taught effectively as teachers are adept at matching varying approaches to the different needs of pupils. However, some of the resources used, particularly books and equipment for pupils with the most complex needs, are designed for much younger pupils. Leaders are aware that they need to ensure that books and other resources match both the learning needs of the pupils and their chronological age, in order to ensure that pupils see themselves as maturing young adults and not 'forever children'.
- Governors and leaders are not afraid to make difficult decisions, keeping their focus on what will be in the best interests of pupils. Governors know the school well and make appropriate checks on the work of leaders. They have a particular strength in listening to what the pupils say about the school, so they know whether their plans are working.
- Not all the required information is published on the website and some that is, is not up to date. Leaders and governors recognise that they need to develop a system to ensure everything is in place and kept up to date.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils have the opportunity to gain recognition for their achievements at the end of Year 11 through external qualifications
- all pupils consistently use resources and books that are matched to their age as well as their level of need
- all the required information is published on the school's website and the information is kept up to date.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Hayter
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors visited 18 lessons for varying amounts of time, often with senior leaders. Meetings were held with senior leaders, subject leaders and members of the governing body, including the vice-chair. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority. Inspectors considered a range of documents relating to the school's work, including safeguarding records and information about pupils' progress. The school's evidence used to confirm the teachers' assessments of pupils' work was reviewed alongside pupils' books.

Inspectors talked with pupils and observed their interactions with staff in a range of activities. The views of parents were considered through five free-text responses recorded on Parent View (Ofsted's online survey for parents), discussions with two parents and reviewing the school's survey of parents. Ten responses to Ofsted's online staff survey were considered and a letter from one member of staff was taken into account.