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7 October 2016

Mr James Husbands
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Husbands

Short inspection of The Willoughby School

Following my visit to the school on 20 September 2016 with Linda Lyn-Cook, 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 October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The governing body and staff team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. At the heart of this good-quality work is the desire to meet the needs of individual pupils. All staff and governors spoken to during the inspection demonstrate a fierce determination to improve the school further.

You joined the school in 2015 after the long serving headteacher moved to a different school. This change resulted in some turbulence and changes to how the school operates. It is testament to governors and all staff that pupils continue to experience a good-quality education.

Pupils make good progress at the school as a result of effective teaching. Since the last inspection, the provision for pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties has improved significantly. There is good use of objects of reference and symbol systems to support pupils' communication. This work has a positive impact on developing pupils' early reading skills. Pupils have access to a range of books and materials to promote their improving recognition of letters and words.

During the last inspection, the school was asked to improve the quality of teaching by making use of assessment information in better ways. School leaders have acted upon this and effective assessments in key areas are used well to inform the next steps of pupils' learning. There is considerable rigour related to the collection and analysis of pupil performance information in English, mathematics, science and

personal and social development. You recognise that these assessment systems need to be as rigorous in other subjects and that all teaching needs to be of a consistently high quality.

The quality of care and support for pupils is good. Inspectors observed pupils being respectfully supported to achieve tasks both in and out of the classroom. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent.

The governing body provides effective challenge. Governors use a wide range of information about the school to inform their plans. There are excellent clerking arrangements in place to ensure that meetings are recorded accurately. This supports the governing body to maintain focus on its three core functions of:

- ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and for the performance management of staff
- overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

Over a three year period, pupils' attendance has continued to be a challenge for the school. While many pupils require significant medical support from clinicians, more needs to be done to enable pupils to attend school regularly.

Safeguarding is effective.

Systems to ensure the safe recruitment of staff are in place and well understood by leaders. The single central record is up to date and contains appropriate information on each staff member. The school building and site is well maintained and ensures pupils are not put at unnecessary risk. Systems for the management of medicines are robust and adequate support is provided from specialist nurses based at a partner school.

The headteacher and deputy safeguarding lead have undertaken appropriate training in relation to child protection arrangements. They have a good understanding of their respective roles. Regular safeguarding training takes place for all staff; as a result, they are clear about what to do if they have a concern about a child.

Inspection findings

- The strong focus on improving the quality and use of assessment across the school has been effective. Teachers' improved use of this information is contributing to pupils' progress in key areas. Where teaching is strongest, teachers and teaching assistants work seamlessly together to ensure that pupils have clear targets for their work; no time is wasted; communication aids and resources are readily available and pupils are being inspired to try their very best.

- Work in the early years provision identifies children's interests and uses these well in order to encourage them to learn more. Strong relationships enable children to develop good social skills. The effective use of practical activities helps to engage children in a range of stimulating tasks. The adults in the early years provision utilise questioning well. This enables children to think through their next steps for themselves. Despite being new to this post, the early years leader has a good understanding of the early years foundation stage requirements. As a result, children experience a positive start to their education at The Willoughby School.
- The sixth form provision, known as the academy classes, provides pupils with good opportunities to prepare for the next stages of their education or care. A work experience programme is in place which gives pupils the chance to gather information about the world of work. Pupils are encouraged to be increasingly independent throughout their time in the academy classes. All pupils leave school to attend a range of providers related to education and care. These next steps are personalised to the needs of the individual pupils.
- The school improvement plan identifies appropriate areas for development. This academic year's plan has been constructed through some consultation which means it has a sharper focus on the key areas for improvement. Staff and governors demonstrate a determination to enable the school to deliver an outstanding quality of education for the pupils. You and the governing body recognise that improving the quality of leadership at all levels will be crucial in fulfilling your aspirations. Governors have wisely appointed two assistant headteachers to further support the development of the school.
- The progress of pupils across the school has many strengths. Your most recent set of information demonstrates that during the last academic year, pupils in key stages 1 and 4 and the sixth form made the fastest rates of progress. There is no significant difference between the rates of progress for particular groups of pupil. This includes pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding.
- Inspectors found the behaviour of pupils to be very good. Pupils are polite and welcoming to visitors in school. Most pupils demonstrated a desire to do well in their lessons and were supported to do so by enthusiastic staff.
- The school website contains useful information about the school but is not yet compliant with the Department for Education (DfE) requirements. Leaders have not ensured that there is detailed information about the curriculum alongside up-to-date information about the current use of pupil premium and sports funding.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupil attendance rates improve
- increased rigour is applied to the assessment of pupils' learning in a wider range of subjects
- all teaching is of a consistently high quality
- the school website is compliant with DfE requirements.

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

Yours sincerely

Phil Harrison
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we met with you, other leaders, and members of the governing body, pupils and staff. We spoke with pupils during lessons and breaktimes and scrutinised the quality of their work. We considered wide-ranging documentary evidence related to safeguarding, school improvement, and quality of teaching, assessment and governance. We took account of 10 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.