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Mrs Fiona Grieveson
Headteacher
Kingsbury Primary Special School
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Dear Mrs Grieveson

Short inspection of Kingsbury Primary Special School

Following my visit to the school on 28 March 2017 with Michelle Beard HMI, 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be outstanding.

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

You and your senior team have successfully guided the school through a number of changes since the previous inspection report. You have ensured that outstanding standards have been maintained, despite the recent rise in pupil numbers, of which many have increasingly complex special educational needs. You have also managed the limited school accommodation and space with creative thought.

The vast majority of staff and parents who responded to the online questionnaire surveys agree that because of the school's outstanding ethos and climate for learning, 'this is a wonderful school with wonderful, caring, helpful staff' and 'this is the best school I have ever known or worked at.'

Teaching and support staff allow pupils greater thinking time when asked to solve problems in lessons so that they have become more independent in their learning. This is a clear improvement since the previous inspection. Leaders and governors know that they need to refine their school development plan further so that they can work more strategically with the local authority to manage a greater and increasing number of pupils with complex learning difficulties. Part of this includes building upon the school's assessment systems alongside its curriculum to ensure that the provision for new pupils is accurately matched to meet their needs.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements remain a strength of the school's work. Staff receive annual update training in safeguarding, including how to recognise signs of different types of abuse. Governors also receive relevant training, including for safer recruitment of staff. Procedures for ensuring safe use of the internet are robust.

Risk assessments are effective, including for when pupils go off site to attend educational visits. Records regarding accidents, incidents and pupil attendance and behaviour are rigorously maintained and analysed to inform any required actions. Parents spoken to and staff surveyed state that arrangements for safeguarding children are very effective, including in early years provision.

Inspection findings

- Senior leaders have ensured that the school has maintained outstanding standards since the previous inspection. Appraisal systems are robust so that teachers are held to account. Leaders and governors have great confidence in their staff to take a lead in moving the school forward.
- All subject leaders contribute towards the school improvement plan. This helps to confirm the clear sense of staff unity, purpose and faith in school leaders. At present, there are several initiatives and action plans which are not sufficiently concise and strategic.
- Because of professional development opportunities there are now specialist teachers to take a lead in training up other staff to meet the diverse needs of pupils.
- Inspectors noted that there is a consistency of approach in how staff teams work together in planning to meet individual needs in lessons across different subjects. Most-able pupils are given opportunities to think for themselves so they develop independence in their learning, for example when encouraged to read out loud from a script during a lesson about the Great Fire of London.
- In the early years class, children are encouraged to develop an interest in the skills of reading, writing and number so that they become used to the demands of more formal learning. Teachers make use of assessment information to provide individual education plans which best meet the needs of each child so that they make good or better progress from their starting points. Leaders are reviewing assessment arrangements and the resulting learning plans in the light of an increasing number of pupils with complex needs that now attend the school.
- Early years and key stage 1 teachers ensure that a flexible approach is taken in order to respond to the needs of individual pupils. There are play opportunities which help in the development of children's fine motor skills. Role play in the 'kitchen' enables turn-taking and making and distributing dough cakes. The most able children could explain what they were doing, 'making sheep'. Less-able pupils are encouraged to increase their focus time on a task. Adapted resources,

like scissors, encourage children's increasing independence when developing their fine motor skills.

- Pupils' work folders in key stage 2 demonstrate that pupils follow an enriching curriculum that includes art, music, science, physical education (PE), religious education (RE) and personal, social and health education (PSHE), as well as educational visits (for example to Southport pier). Older pupils go each year on a residential visit to experience outdoor pursuits activities, which helps to develop their independence, social skills and resilience. There are shared curriculum activities and themed days with the co-located primary school, for example World Book Day and activities with visiting artists. The headteacher at the co-located school has nothing but praise for the positive links that have been established with Kingsbury.
- In each classroom there are agreed and consistent strategies adopted by staff teams to support pupils in developing their personal and social skills. Some pupils have behaviour plans which are adhered to closely. The attitudes and engagement of pupils in their work are consistently good or better. Challenging behaviour incidents are decreasing because skilled staff work well together in line with the school's agreed policy. Leaders analyse behaviour incidents and report to governors about what they have done to improve behaviour in school. The conduct of pupils in different contexts is outstanding. Supervision by staff is sensitively pitched to meet individual needs. There have been no fixed-term exclusions for several years.
- The extended services manager (ESM) establishes reasons for pupil absence and then sets challenging targets for parents and pupils. This approach has led to overall improvements so that attendance is closer to the national average for special schools. Persistent absence relates mostly to pupils with medical needs, who are also challenged to improve their attendance. Tuition at home is occasionally offered where there are too many barriers to attendance in school.
- The governing body is a mix of longer-serving and new governors. A local special school headteacher is on the governing body. Governors are regular visitors to the school and work closely with each of the classes in reviewing the school's work. As a result, governors are knowledgeable about the school, for example in their analysis of behaviour and teachers' use of assessment information to inform their planning. Governors have worked together to produce a development plan following an 'away day'. They have an accurate, shared and strategic view of the direction they need to take for the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- They manage the increasing numbers of pupils attending the school who have complex learning needs even more effectively by:
 - further refinement of school development planning
 - further development and improvement of pupil assessment systems and the related curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Jon Ashley
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, the team met with you and your deputy headteacher. A meeting was held with the chair of governors and four other governors (including two parent governors). A telephone conversation was held with the school's local authority link officer. An inspector met with the headteacher of the co-located primary school. Inspectors conducted joint lesson observations with you and your deputy headteacher. They looked at pupils' learning journals, workbooks, folders, individual education plans and classroom displays. An inspector heard pupils reading. Inspectors observed pupils on the school corridors, in the dining area and on the playground. Inspectors considered a range of documentation, including the school's review of its strengths and areas to develop, the school development plan and information about pupils' ability levels and progress. Inspectors looked at documentation relating to safeguarding, including safe recruitment of staff and risk assessments. They considered staff, parent and pupil questionnaire survey information from the online questionnaire site.