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Mr Dani Sive
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mr Sive

Short inspection of Frank Barnes School for Deaf Children

Following my visit to the school on 21 March 2017 with Helen Bailey, 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 outstanding in June 2012.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment as acting headteacher in September 2016, you have built a supportive and effective team of new leaders. An aspirational governing body has ensured that you have all been appropriately supported to maintain a culture of high aspirations throughout the school. The senior leadership team has drawn on its collective skills and expertise to work together and plan for how the school can be even better. Consequently, standards have remained high and the school continues to improve.

Since the last inspection, the school has relocated to an innovative, purpose-built site with impressive facilities. The site is shared with a new mainstream primary academy and you work closely with the headteacher of this school. Leaders and governors of both schools are firmly committed to developing collaborative and inclusive working practices. For example, pupils share common breaks and lunchtimes and can socialise freely. Staff work together to share good practice and attend professional training opportunities that benefit both schools. For example, teachers and pupils from the mainstream school learn British Sign Language (BSL) to ensure that everyone can communicate effectively with each other.

You are passionate about supporting pupils who are deaf to communicate effectively and achieve as well as all other pupils. You participate in local and national forums to promote the use of BSL and have shared the school's assessment model to benefit other providers.

Members of the governing body offer strong support and challenge to leaders. They have put in place a programme of professional development to allow new postholders to grow in confidence and become increasingly effective. Consequently, staff and parents have expressed very few concerns during this period of significant leadership change. This is because teaching and learning standards remain high and pupils continue to make excellent progress.

The single area for improvement identified during the last inspection has been fully addressed. Numeracy skills are reinforced in all lessons through high-quality displays and carefully planned learning activities. Pupils are provided with opportunities to apply these skills across all subjects and during regular trips and visits outside the school. As a result, most pupils, including those who are most able, make good or better progress and achieve as well as other pupils with similar starting points in mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding systems are very robust. Leaders have ensured that safeguarding procedures take account of the latest guidance, and the very comprehensive safeguarding policy reflects this. All the required checks are completed before staff take up their appointments and are recorded carefully. Leaders and governors from both schools sharing the building have worked together to align policies and procedures for keeping pupils safe. For example, arrangements for both sets of pupils and parents to enter and leave the building safely have been carefully considered and are appropriately managed. All staff attend regular safeguarding updates and training, including recent sessions on the 'Prevent' duty, online safety and the risks of gang associations.

Staff work closely with other professionals and parents to ensure that any safeguarding concerns are identified as soon as possible. They liaise with multi-agency teams from a number of local authorities to ensure that all pupils' education, health and care needs are carefully considered and well supported.

Inspection findings

- The school's improvement plan has been informed by accurate and detailed evaluations of the school's effectiveness. Leaders have made good use of external reports to check that their actions are making a difference.
- All staff apply the agreed policies and procedures in a consistent manner. For example, staff share the same high expectations regarding pupils' behaviour. This has helped some pupils who have been excluded from other schools to settle well and make rapid improvements in their behaviour and learning.
- Accurate starting points are established when pupils join the school. Nearly all pupils make at least good progress across all subjects and classes. Some individuals make outstanding progress from very low starting points due to the effective support they receive.

- Teachers use assessment information systems well to plan appropriate learning activities for every pupil. Teachers and other professionals review the progress pupils make on a regular basis. They agree further targets for pupils to work towards and provide additional support to allow them to succeed.
- Engaging learning activities and helpful feedback build pupils' confidence and encourage them to find out more. Pupils are challenged to think deeply about their work and are proud of what they achieve.
- Governors hold leaders strongly to account for pupils making progress in line with their full potential. They receive regular reports, make frequent visits and check that they have received accurate information.
- The curriculum is innovative and allows pupils to develop a strong sense of their own worth. For example, a recent BSL recognition day was inspiring for some pupils, who heard about the achievements of other people who were deaf.
- The school offers excellent support to families with children who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities within the local area. However, this is not fully reflected in the published SEN and disabilities local offer for Camden. The school's SEN policy and SEN information report also require amendments to take full account of the SEN code of practice.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a permanent senior leadership team is appointed and supported with ongoing mentoring and training to allow the current high standards to be sustained
- further opportunities for collaboration with the co-located mainstream school are sought to allow pupils and staff to work together to raise the aspirations of pupils who are deaf.

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

Yours sincerely

Lesley Cox
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the acting deputy headteacher and the acting senior teacher. Inspectors also spoke to the special educational needs coordinator and therapists who work at the school. A meeting was held with two members of the governing body, with the chair of governors and another governor participating by telephone. Two representatives of the local authority

school improvement service met with inspectors. Inspectors toured the school's teaching and learning facilities and made short visits to lessons, accompanied by senior leaders. They spoke to pupils about their work and observed breaks and lunchtimes. They met with a small group of pupils, using an interpreter, and considered a number of case studies. The 29 responses to the online staff questionnaire and the six responses to the pupil questionnaire were evaluated, along with the school's own surveys. The views of four parents who completed the Parent View questionnaire and responses to the school's parental survey were considered. A range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plan, pupil progress tracking information, governing body minutes and evidence of safeguarding arrangements, were scrutinised. A check was made on the school's website, which contains all of the required information.