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Mrs Lisa Hughes
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Lisa Hughes

Short inspection of Kemball Special School

Following my visit to the school on 18 October 2017 with Robert Roalfe 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 Kemball Special School were judged to be good in June 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since the last inspection, Kemball School has more than doubled in size. Leaders and governors have continued in their efforts to drive the school forward despite the rapid increase in pupil numbers. You, along with your deputy headteacher, have a clear passion for ensuring that the needs of all pupils are met, while retaining the relationship you have built with each family. You have taken the school on an incredible journey by accepting pupils who have needs that are unfamiliar to you and your staff. Leaders, staff and governors have risen to this challenge by introducing a robust system of continuing professional development and constantly adapting the school environment to meet the needs of all pupils.

You have clear expectations of your pupils and staff and you are quick to determine the next steps required to continue in your ambition to provide a stimulating yet safe environment for your pupils. You have introduced new schemes of work and programmes for pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties, such as the weekly café, which post-16 students run.

Your self-evaluation of Kemball school is accurate and you are quick to identify areas of improvement. Leaders have taken decisive action to address areas identified during the previous inspection. You have recognised that the curriculum offered needed to be adapted, and plans have been put in place to allow for the diverse needs and the complexity of all pupils. In key stage 4, you are introducing the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and a Life Skills Programme of study, which encourages pupils and students to learn home management and how to travel independently and cook simple snacks.

The senior leadership team is relatively small for a school of this size and you have recognised the need to expand and draw on other staff members' skills. You have ensured that teaching across the school is good but have identified that there are still elements of teaching, learning and assessment that need developing further.

Middle leaders are new to post but they have already shown that they are effective by organising joint planning and coordination meetings each half term, to discuss assessment and targets. They have begun to work closely with partnership schools to develop outreach support in mathematics, music and art. The middle leaders are enthusiastic in their desire to improve outcomes for pupils and have introduced functional skills examinations for key stage 3, which will be new for 2018. They clearly demonstrate that they have the capacity to assist with driving the school forward.

The school has developed a strong partnership with the local college, and this has enabled pupils to participate in courses at an appropriate level for their needs. Structured sessions in key stage 4 and post 16 enable pupils to have more positive experiences and this encourages them to share their experiences, achievements and feelings with others in a workbook or verbally.

The governing body is extremely supportive of you and your deputy headteacher but recognises the importance of providing challenge where necessary. Governors are keen to develop their own skills and have recently introduced a system to ensure that they have a deeper knowledge of pupils' and staff's abilities. They are proud that Kemball School provides everything that pupils require to assist them in their learning and well-being. Governors also spoke with pride about the school's relationship with Keele University and they feel proud that they are able to work with student teachers.

Parents are extremely positive about the school and one stated, 'Kemball offers a safe and happy environment for our child.' All parents reported that they would recommend Kemball to other parents, and inspectors were told that 'leadership is amazing'. Parents feel that all of the staff are understanding of pupils' needs and that they see the progress made in school at home.

Pupils at Kemball School are confident and extremely polite. Their manners and behaviour when walking around school are exceptional. They are confident and enjoy sharing their positive experiences about the school. Behaviour management is a strength of the school. When negative behaviours are observed, staff dealt with

them effectively by using a range of de-escalation techniques and with minimal disruption to learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are genuinely good. Pupils reported to inspectors that they are confident that teachers would 'sort out any bullying'.

Attendance is improving, and leaders and governors have actioned the recruitment of additional staff to support families by introducing sensory stories and providing home visits and a translation service. Where pupils have serious and complex medical conditions, school staff provide additional support to ensure that pupils' well-being is paramount. A recent parental survey by school leaders shows that parents feel supported by the school's efforts to improve attendance.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that there is a strong and positive safeguarding culture in the school. Staff and governors have access to high-quality training from school leaders and the local authority. Staff feel confident about raising concerns and make referrals promptly. As a result of this, pupils feel safe in their surroundings.

The school's recording system is very robust, and careful checks are made on all visitors and staff to ensure their suitability to work with children. All staff understand the need for vigilance and they are quick to take action in the event that concerns are raised by other adults and pupils.

You have a robust system in place to ensure that all files are kept in order and secure. Referrals are followed up in a timely manner, and escalation procedures are followed quickly when concerns and issues are not resolved satisfactorily.

Inspection findings

- The majority of lessons provide structure in order to engage all learners. Next steps are clearly identified in the primary classrooms and workbooks. Most teachers provide an appropriate level of challenge, and pupils are provided with feedback to support their learning. As a result, pupils in these classes are confident learners. In some lessons, support staff provide answers to pupils too quickly and so do not give them enough encouragement to be independent learners.
- Teachers are well supported by able teaching assistants. The high level of support in classes for pupils that have profound and multiple learning difficulties means that all pupils are able to participate in lessons and feel valued for their contributions. For example, physical aspects such as feeding and changing are completed with minimal disruption to pupils' learning.
- Staff demonstrate a very caring and sensitive attitude to all learners and communicate with gentle, reassuring voices.
- Pupils are encouraged to use self-assessment in their learning in the majority of classes. However, where teachers do not provide appropriate challenge, pupils

are not given the opportunity to self-correct work.

- Older pupils are encouraged to reflect on their skills and independence by participating in work experience. Some pupils are able to access the wider community and visit work placements. Other pupils provide the service in a café in school and help to prepare snacks and drinks for their peers.
- Kemball School is an inviting environment, and pupils' work is on display throughout to celebrate their achievements. Pupils have developed a sense of pride in their work and surroundings.
- Leaders offer a broad curriculum which encourages pupils to work towards life targets. Some accredited courses are offered to key stage 4, but there are not enough opportunities for the most able pupils to gain the accreditations and qualifications that they are capable of achieving.
- Senior and middle leaders use assessment well to inform planning and interventions. The headteacher has a clear understanding of each individual pupil's needs and progress, but leaders now need to identify and analyse cohort groups that require intervention strategies. Leaders recognise the need to share assessment levels with teaching and support staff to enable them to provide appropriate targets.
- Disadvantaged pupils are supported with additional programmes such as accelerated reading plans, travel to college, additional physiotherapy and speech and language support.
- The school's rebound therapy programme provides an intense physiotherapy support for pupils who have physical disabilities. The rebound team provides high-level and consistent support to ensure the safety of pupils while attending therapy. When participating in these sessions, pupils are motivated to learn and have fun.
- Leaders have worked hard to address attendance issues. Case studies examined by the inspection team show progress following a range of intervention strategies, including the employment of the family support worker.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the curriculum is extended further to support the most able pupils in gaining academic and vocational qualifications, including in mathematics and English
- progress in personal and social development continues to be rigorously tracked and that you provide analysis of cohort groups from their starting points for governors
- the leadership is further expanded to allow for secure and robust delegation of tasks to key staff who have the skills and capabilities to execute plans
- teaching is further improved through giving pupils a chance to gain confidence by answering questions without help, evaluating their own work and having targets to work towards.

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

Yours sincerely

Kim Ellis
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors held meetings with you, other leaders, staff, two governors and one representative from the local authority.

Inspectors made short visits to 20 classrooms and one rebound therapy session. We looked at pupils' books and files and spoke to pupils informally. We spoke with parents when they arrived at school and considered nine responses to the online survey, Parent View. One letter was received at school addressed to Ofsted inspectors. We also looked at 19 responses from staff to the staff survey.

Various school documents were scrutinised, including safeguarding records, the school's self-evaluation and development plan, performance management of staff, assessment information about pupils' progress, and information about attendance, behaviour and safety. Inspectors looked at published information on the schools website.