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Mr Michael Loveman
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Dear Mr Loveman

Short inspection of Cann Bridge School

Following my visit to the school on 16 January 2018 with Mark Lees, 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes in teaching staff, middle leadership, and governance arrangements. New staff have introduced a deeper understanding of the physical skills needed for writing. Governors continue to monitor the school's provision effectively, holding you and other leaders firmly to account. Children, pupils and students with additional medical needs remain very well supported by experienced and qualified nursing staff.

The middle leaders are providing strong direction for the curriculum changes they are implementing. The curriculum enables pupils to make good progress during their time in school. Starting from the Nursery, children learn how to communicate their thoughts, needs and ideas. As they grow and move through the school, pupils develop an understanding of the world around them. They gain independent and team skills through the nurture and care provided by skilled and supportive staff. When they leave school, almost all students go onto the City College to take living skills courses, or have supportive living arrangements.

You, and other leaders, have carefully considered the work of the school. You have continued to investigate what you need to do to improve the school even further. Taking note of the Rochford Review and visiting other schools has provided you, and other leaders, with a wide range of different approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. Staff are adapting what they have seen, and what current research is showing to inform new ways of working and enhancing the curriculum still further. For example, since September 2017 the school has been trialling in a

few classes a 'pre-phonics' scheme which it has devised. Anecdotally, this is helping pupils to 'see' words when they are out and about in the local community.

You and your team have also worked on the areas for development identified in the last inspection. You were asked to make sure that the activities provided for pupils were linked to their learning targets and that pupils should know what these targets are. Staff are very clear about what pupils have achieved and what pupils need to do next. Pupils are helped to understand what they are doing and why. Some staff do not record the next smaller steps for pupils. This is an area that is improving as part of the revamped assessment system.

Some areas of the school, such as the extension and internal parts of the sixth form, provide an attractive and supportive learning environment. Other parts, most notably the individual outside areas, do not. These areas do not provide the same good level of equipment and resources for children, pupils and students as seen used in classrooms. They are not used to support and extend learning as well as they should. We also agreed that older pupils and students in the sixth form need to have more access to age-appropriate reading materials.

Safeguarding is effective.

The national health nursing team are an integral part of the way the school ensures the strong welfare, health and safety of pupils. Safeguarding and child-protection procedures are secure and effective. The school leaders, including nursing staff, take prompt action over concerns to support pupils' welfare and well-being. The safeguarding team work very effectively with parents, carers, other providers and agencies to ensure that pupils are safe and protected at school and at home.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, for example when crossing the road. They are also taught how to act appropriately with people they do not know.

Recruitment of staff follows government guidelines. The governor responsible for safeguarding ensures that the school's systems are implemented effectively.

Following accidents or 'near misses', the school promptly adapts practice and procedures to reduce future risk. You and the governing body take advice from external specialists to ensure that the school is a secure and safe environment.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection we agreed to look at how the school had responded to the previous inspection report. We saw first-hand the good learning interaction between adults and pupils. Staff find out what is currently interesting the pupil and use this to inform their planning. Teachers make sure that pupils have clear learning targets with appropriate activities to help them reach these targets. You, and other leaders, ensure the accuracy of staff assessments of pupils' work through external moderation with other schools. On occasion, some assessment systems are not used consistently well. This hampers the easy identification of

the next smaller steps for pupils' learning.

- During our visits to classrooms you agreed that the outdoor environments are underutilised to enhance and extend pupils' learning. We also agreed that although the internal sixth form areas were welcoming and attractive, some other areas of the school are far less inviting.
- Another aspect we looked at was to see how pupils' social skills were being developed. Inspectors checked that they had enough opportunities to interact with each other during the school day, which they do. Pupils are taught how to accept and work in cooperation with other pupils, as well as adults. In general, due to pupils' special educational needs, this learning is in very small steps. Staff act as excellent role models, demonstrating manners and social skills that pupils can learn from and copy. The school council is inclusive and vibrant. They are currently helping the staff to plan World Book Day.
- The final line of enquiry was to see how well the curriculum, particularly for the older pupils and students, helps to prepare them for life after school. We found that the activities pupils undertake are age appropriate and steadily build upon the work that they have done previously. Staff ensure that pupils have an incremental and wide range of opportunities to develop independent living skills, through activities such as shopping and making meals for each other. However, we agreed that older pupils and students need to have a greater number and variety of reading resources that are age appropriate.
- Business enterprises are started in Years 10 and 11 with manufacturing processes such as selling gifts for Christmas and the weekly 'bacon bar' providing bacon sandwiches for staff. Through these activities, linked to work in mathematics lessons, pupils gain a good understanding about how to use money. They learn the importance of saving money to acquire goods that are more expensive than the money they have to hand. They learn how to make choices and the impact that making a wrong one can have. For example, if they fail to complete their part of the sandwich making, then no sandwiches are completely made.
- In the sixth form, students prepare lunchboxes for staff and run a cafe. This requires them to work collegiately in small teams, taking the views and desires of their customers into account. They learn how to adjust quantities for the different portions they need, for example one tin of tuna supplying two baked potatoes. They are supported to try different types of physical activities in ways they can continue when they leave school. For example, getting on the public bus to the swimming baths and other recreational activities.
- There are very few local supported internships available for pupils. To compensate for this, the school makes good use of work-based experiences for students on the campus such as working in the administration office, or with the campus maintenance support and caretaking team. Students also have opportunities for work placements in the local community centre and donkey sanctuary. You and other special schools in the area continue to try to extend the range of opportunities for students.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that the:

- new curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment systems are fully embedded day to day in all classes
- outdoor spaces in all classes are improved and used to enhance learning
- range and amount of reading materials for older pupils and students are extended.

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

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Together, we agreed the timetable and activities for the day.

Inspectors met with other leaders and members of the governing body. Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils and observed them at lunchtime. Inspectors and senior leaders scrutinised the quality of pupils' work and observed pupils, in all classes, learning in lessons. We took account of the 16 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. In addition, we considered the 21 responses from staff. There were no responses from pupils to Ofsted's electronic questionnaire.

Inspectors considered a wide range of documentary evidence, including records relating to safeguarding, the quality of teaching, the curriculum, assessment information, and the school's self-evaluation and development plan.