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Ms Lisa Atack  
Executive Headteacher  
Greenfields Specialist School for Communication  
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Dear Ms Atack

### **Short inspection of Greenfields Specialist School for Communication**

Following my visit to the school on 7 February 2018 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in February 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school. You and the leadership team have created a caring and purposeful learning environment. The development of pupils' communication skills is at the heart of all your practice and as a result, pupils make good progress from their starting points. The staff are alert to the needs of the pupils and make learning enjoyable. Teachers are creative and successfully promote pupils' engagement. The pupils are focused in their learning and want to achieve well. Parents who spoke with the inspectors were pleased with the care provided by school staff and the progress their children are making.

Pupils arrive into school with great enthusiasm. The relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. The staff greet the pupils warmly when they arrive in the morning, attend to their medication and check the pupils' communication aids. The morning assembly provides opportunities for pupils' participation. Pupils attentively watch videos of other pupils' achievements in assembly, and the signing choir performs enthusiastically. Pupils' personal and communication skills are developed as soon as they arrive in school.

Pupils have access to a wide range of external support services to help their development. The conductive education team support pupils to develop their mobility. Some pupils are now able to walk up the steps to the second floor, rather

than take a lift. Pupils have access to music therapy which enables them to explore rhythm and it can calm pupils if they become anxious. The sensory circuits promote pupils' self-confidence and physical development. One pupil who was reluctant to jump off a high platform successfully and independently completed the jump, following skilled direction from staff. Disadvantaged pupils have equal access to all the therapies and they make as much progress as other pupils.

At the time of the predecessor school's last inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that pupils had clear information about how well they are doing and what they need to learn next. Pupils are well informed by staff about how well they are achieving in their learning. For example, pupils in one class were learning which nouns and verbs to use to make a phrase describing a picture. This was challenging for pupils. Nonetheless, staff successfully guided the pupils to achieve well and moved them on to their next learning task.

As a result of the predecessor school's last inspection, staff were asked to provide more time for pupils to complete the tasks set, and further develop the pupils' problem-solving skills. Staff are very patient in allowing pupils to think about the tasks and not providing pupils with answers. This was in evidence when a pupil was using symbols to choose a drink. The teaching assistant gently encouraged the pupil to make a decision and after some time, the pupil successfully made a choice using the symbols. Pupils are given opportunities to problem solve in mathematics, and some are able to represent data in charts.

Finally, leaders were asked to ensure that the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning have clear success measures related to pupils' learning. This area of leadership still needs to improve further. The school development plan does not consistently contain measurable success criteria by which actions taken can be clearly evaluated. Leaders' self-evaluation of the school's work does not contain evaluative statements linked to the amount of progress pupils make. As a result, areas of weakness are not identified quickly enough.

Following this inspection, I have asked you to improve the school development plan to include measurable success criteria linked to pupils' progress. I have also asked that leaders' evaluation of the school's work focuses more on the progress of pupils. Finally, I have asked you to develop the target-setting for key skills, particularly in English, to ensure that they are more appropriately matched to pupils' abilities.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders promote a strong safeguarding culture within the school. The roles and responsibilities of staff for safeguarding are outlined in the school's policy and are on display in the school. Staff training is up to date and staff are very knowledgeable about the process of reporting a safeguarding concern. If a concern is raised, leaders take action promptly and a detailed log of events is kept.

The family liaison officer develops positive relationships with pupils and families before they start school. She provides ongoing support, linking well with external

agencies to ensure that pupils and families receive the most appropriate support. Pupils' attendance is tracked closely.

The attendance of all pupils is above the national average for special schools. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent rose last year. However, staff have worked well with external agencies to support pupils who have been persistently absent. This is proving successful. In the current academic year, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has fallen.

Procedures for the recruitment of staff are secure. All the required checks on adults who work in the school have been completed. The leadership has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

### **Inspection findings**

- Developing pupils' communication is a key strength of the school. Staff use a range of techniques, symbols, signing, eye-gaze and verbal conversations to communicate with pupils. The augmentative and alternative communication team and speech and language therapists support staff and pupils to communicate well with each other. They provide training sessions for staff and then follow this up by visiting the classrooms and modelling the communication techniques. Consequently, staff are well trained and can successfully communicate with all pupils in lessons, using a wide range of techniques. Pupils who are new to the school are assessed to find out which communication techniques work best, and their progress is subsequently closely tracked. Pupils' behaviour is good because they can communicate their feelings.
- Leaders make regular checks on the quality of teaching. They check the school's policies and procedures are being applied. However, when leaders check teaching, they do not evaluate the impact it is having on the amount of progress pupils make. As a result, areas where pupils appear to make less progress are not explored thoroughly enough to understand the reasons why. In addition, the school development plan does not consistently have measurable targets by which governors can judge if actions taken by leaders to improve pupils' progress have been successful or not.
- The school's own assessments show that in 2017 pupils made less progress in English and science compared to mathematics. Leaders have only just started to look into the reasons for this. The targets set for pupils to achieve in English are not matched closely enough to the pupils' current abilities. Leaders have recently recognised this and have commissioned an external consultant to come into school to help them to target set for the key subject skills. In science, staff want to improve pupils' abilities in the key skills of science. However, they have not yet identified those key skills upon which to focus in order to improve pupils' scientific skills.
- Leaders have been successfully developing the sixth-form provision. There are now more opportunities for students to participate in activities which involve them working with other students and adults to build their self-confidence and prepare them well for their next steps. Students operate their own café. This

involves students checking the stock on delivery, baking cakes and serving refreshments to other students, staff and visitors. Some students use computer tablets to identify the cost of items for the tuck shop. Pupils eagerly followed the recipe to bake cookies. They were encouraged well by staff to be as independent as possible when baking. All were enthusiastic and focused. Students also litter pick for the Forestry Commission, help with administrative tasks in school and maintain the school's library. More students are expected to go on to further education than previously.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- plans for improvement have measurable success criteria by which governors can hold leaders to account
- the monitoring of teaching focuses on teachers' impact on the progress made by pupils
- the targets set for pupils, particularly in English, are matched more closely to the abilities of the individual pupil or groups of pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Finch  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, we met with you, the head of school, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, the school business and resources manager, the key stage 3 coordinator and the science coordinator. We also held meetings with the leaders of augmentative and alternative communication and conductive education, a music therapist, and with small groups of teachers and teaching assistants. We observed learning through the school with leaders, and observed a leader giving feedback to a member of staff. We reviewed pupils' work and communicated with pupils. We met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. We listened to pupils read and spoke with pupils. You and I reviewed records about keeping children safe. We studied your school development plan and the school's self-evaluation. We spoke with two parents and received one letter from a parent. The school did not send out the pupil or the staff surveys.