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Ms Susan Davies  
Headteacher  
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London  
E9 5RB

Dear Ms Davies

### **Short inspection of Ickburgh School**

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 2018 with Teresa Neary, 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 July 2014.

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

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

Since taking up post after the previous inspection, you have managed significant changes. The school has moved to a new building and pupil numbers have increased dramatically. The type of special needs that the school caters for has also changed. At the last inspection, the majority of pupils were those who had profound and multiple learning difficulties. Now you have an increasing group of pupils who have severe learning difficulties. You also have a growing number of pupils in the early years with autism. These changes have understandably presented a challenge to you and your staff. You have expanded your leadership team and are focused on developing the provision for these new groups of pupils.

You and your team have developed a supportive learning community. Positive and caring relationships between staff and pupils are evident throughout the school. Pupils are happy and eager to get to their classrooms at the start of the day. The pupils' transition from their buses and into school is calm and well organised. Pupils in the school council communicate why they enjoy school and what their favourite activities are. They make choices and are encouraged to give their opinions on issues such as school uniform, playground equipment and physical education kit.

Pupils are given opportunities to visit places in the local community. Older pupils attend work experience placements where appropriate. Some have worked for an events company to make wedding decorations. Other work placements include

preparing food packs and parcels for purchase in a local community centre. Students in the sixth form are given opportunities to practise their independence skills needed for adulthood. These students are well prepared for the next stage of their education and training.

Governors know the school well. They understand the impact of the increasing number of pupils and the changing nature of their special needs on the school. Governors are proud to be part of the governing body and visit the school regularly. Parent governors say their child is safe in school and any concerns are dealt with promptly. The governing body provides an effective balance of challenge and support to school leaders.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have made certain that there is a strong culture of safeguarding within the school. Staff have regular training, including aspects of safeguarding such as the 'Prevent' duty. All members of the leadership team and your family liaison workers have completed designated safeguarding lead training. You work closely with health professionals and therapists ensuring the safety of your very vulnerable pupils.

Pupils say they feel safe in school. They can identify a staff member they would tell if they were worried about anything. Staff know the procedure to follow if they have any safeguarding concerns about a child. Records of referrals to the designated safeguarding lead are kept well. Pupils behave well around the school. Detailed records are kept of any physical interventions necessary due to pupils' special needs.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed to look at how effective leaders are in improving pupils' attendance. Yearly data show some improvements in their attendance overall but absence remains higher than in special schools nationally. Leaders are acutely aware of this and are taking steps to tackle the issue. Newly established family liaison workers are supporting parents and carers to reduce absence for the pupils causing the most concern. This is beginning to have a positive impact on raising levels of attendance. Very close monitoring systems are now in place. Most absence is due to illness and some due to medical needs. However, a significant amount of time is lost due to transport issues and respite holidays. Unauthorised absence is lower in this school than for special schools nationally.
- Next, we agreed to look at the progress pupils make as they move through the school. We were interested to see how leaders make sure that pupils' progress is measured accurately. The school's progress information for mathematics, English, computing, and personal, social and health education is strong. Termly progress meetings are held to check whether pupils are on track, and targets are

adjusted according to circumstances. Progress measured in this way is broadly similar for groups of pupils such as boys, girls and those who are disadvantaged. Targets are also set for many other aspects of pupils' work and development in school. While evidence is collected on an individual pupil basis, there is no overall picture of progress in these additional areas. You recognise this and plan to implement an electronic system to collate evidence and capture progress across all areas of pupils' achievement.

- At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to make sure that teachers plan work, particularly for the most able, that challenges them at the right level. To look at this, inspectors visited classrooms accompanied by your senior leaders. Teachers carefully plan activities for individual pupils at the start of the day, enabling them to settle successfully into the school routine. Pupils make rapid progress and are fully engaged in lessons where teachers plan work matched well to their individual abilities because they are given a suitable level of challenge. Pupils make less progress and are not always on task when they all complete the same tasks regardless of individual ability.
- Where teachers understand their pupils' learning needs well, they plan sensory experiences enhancing pupils' participation and engagement. This was seen in storytelling sessions in celebration of World Book Day. In some classrooms, pupils are using visual supports which help them communicate and get on with their learning. Some variations were noted across the school in the provision for different classes. You recognise the need to develop the curriculum further for both pupils with severe learning difficulties and those with autism.
- Finally, at the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve how effectively teaching assistants are used to help all groups of pupils learn well. You have developed specialist teaching assistant roles with distinct responsibilities. Family liaison workers, for example, are beginning to impact on improving attendance. Our visits to classrooms showed many examples of teaching assistants providing highly skilled and exactly the right level of learning support for pupils. This allows pupils to achieve maximum progress but also encourages independence. Occasionally, teaching assistants sit passively next to pupils who are not participating in learning. This results in missed opportunities for pupils to make progress not only with their work in subjects but also with their social interaction skills.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the focus on improving attendance continues
- the provision for pupils who have severe learning difficulties and for those who have autism is developed further to meet their individual learning needs effectively
- the communication environment is developed to allow all pupils to express themselves in their preferred way of communicating
- all pupils' targets and achievements are included in measures of pupils' progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Joanna Tarrant  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors met with you, your senior leaders, teachers and teaching assistants. We met with members of the governing body, including the chair and parent governors. We also met with a representative from the local authority.

We visited classrooms accompanied by senior leaders to collect a range of evidence relating to teaching, learning and assessment. We met with pupils in the school council to talk about their experience of school and aspects of safeguarding. We scrutinised a wide range of school documentation including the school's self-evaluation, school development plan, and pupils' files and folders. We took account of five free-text responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. There were no responses to the staff or pupil questionnaires.