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Mrs Karen Robson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Robson

Short inspection of Kirkleatham Hall School

Following my visit to the school on 15 March 2018 with David Penny, 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Changes to accommodate the increase in the numbers of pupils joining the school, and the more complex needs and medical conditions that pupils have, have been well managed by leaders, governors and staff. Many new staff have been appointed, including those who are leading the development of communication across the school, and others who are developing the well-being of pupils and supporting greater liaison between school and families. Despite the challenges that these changes have posed, you have maintained highly effective support for pupils' personal development, welfare and behaviour.

The school is held in high regard by parents and carers and pupils. Parents said that they like the welcoming and nurturing atmosphere in the school and pupils told us that Kirkleatham Hall is a friendly school. Both parents and pupils value the staff. Pupils said, 'The teachers are the best thing about the school.' Parents told us that you, your deputies and staff are always available, and are out every morning to meet them and greet their children as they arrive at school. They said, 'Nothing is too much trouble for staff' and 'Communication between home and school is good.'

Staff spoke positively about your leadership and management of the school. Those who responded to the Ofsted survey enjoy their work and are proud to be at the school.

At the last inspection, you were asked to ensure that strong practice in teaching was shared across the school, in order to accelerate pupils' learning and progress. You are working to do this. We found much to celebrate in the quality of teaching

as a result of your close monitoring of the work taking place across the school. However, you and your leadership team acknowledge that there is more to do to develop teaching and to strengthen assessment practice and the setting of pupils' targets.

You were also asked to make sure that progress data was understood and used well by all staff. Information discussed during the inspection showed that you and your leadership team are using data and information to inform decision-making. For example, a key appointment of a communication leader has helped teachers to develop their skills further and to meet the needs of pupils joining the school with little or no communication. The school's assessments of pupils show that almost all meet their targets or make rapid progress in this key area of development.

Attendance is sharply and actively monitored. Your use of data in this context helps to inform a range of strategies and targeted support to reduce persistent absence. However, the school does not use data and information as well as it could to track the progress of disadvantaged pupils, or those who are the most able in the school. Establishing a consistent approach to assessment across the four phases of early years, primary, secondary and further education remains challenging. The latter phase includes pupils from Year 11 to Year 14. Your plans to ensure that teachers work together to ease pupils' transition from one class to another are well founded and are beginning to be responded to.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and rightly prioritise this aspect of their role. All staff undergo thorough checks as part of the safer recruitment and vetting process. The school's single central record of pre-employment checks meets statutory requirements. Staff, including those who are new to the school, describe a comprehensive approach to training and induction to school safeguarding procedures. Since the previous inspection, the support provided to vulnerable children and those in need has been strengthened further. A team of five staff, all trained as designated safeguarding leads, provide detailed knowledge and specific support in the early years, primary, secondary and post-16 phases of the school. The appointment of a family and student well-being lead also provides a useful link between school and home for parents and families who need additional support.

Pupils are well supervised from the moment they arrive in the morning until leaving at the end of the day. The site is secure and pupils say that they feel safe. There is nowhere that they feel unsafe at school. Regular routines contribute to them feeling secure and confident. Every pupil has a trusted adult to whom they can take worries, and they will be listened to. The curriculum supports work on keeping safe, and pupils are sensitively supported with guidance and advice. For example, a focus on relationships and what to do if actions or attention are unwanted is helping them develop into confident young people. Pupils are supported to be aware of risks, particularly when using mobile phones and social media. The school and parents have worked well together to help pupils learn to be careful about giving out information. This has been done in a way that has not increased their worries.

Inspection findings

- Teaching is well planned in many classes to strengthen learning, deepen understanding and reinforce skills to enable pupils to achieve their individual targets. For example, in a Nursery class, a teacher skilfully developed listening and physical skills in pointing, understanding and making choices, to meet the children's complex learning needs. However, effective planning is not consistent across classes and each phase. In some classes, pupils worked on tasks with no connection between them and made slower progress.
- Work in Years 11, 12 and 14 is effectively planned, and targets are sharply pitched to meet pupils' needs. Pupils are articulate and have ambition and aspiration about their education. This was clearly reflected in discussions with pupils and their parents. Parents say that pupils are more engaged with school than previously. In all classes, pupils were engaged and happy and participating in purposeful activities. Sheltered work experience in the school café is promoting pupils' enthusiasm about learning.
- The accuracy and sharpness of pupils' targets are variable across classes. Staff do not always use data and information well enough to set stimulating tasks that are focused on pupils' learning needs and their next steps. Sometimes the work is generic or falls short in challenging some individuals, such as disadvantaged or more able pupils. The more able pupils told inspectors that work is not always challenging, but when they ask, they receive more complex tasks.
- Teachers are developing assessment to identify smaller steps of progress and achievement more securely within the early years foundation stage profile. A sample of children's files showed that they are making swift progress from their starting points, particularly in communication, language and personal development.
- Leaders are also working effectively to build continuity across Years 10 and 11 and Years 12, 13 and 14. The work is providing a more connected experience for older students. Teachers give them choice in the learning tasks to motivate them and encouragement to have a go. Pupils are not afraid to fail and take risks in their learning. They are aware of their targets, which are well aligned to their needs and independent living skills, in order to prepare them for their next steps. Many students aspire to go to college.
- Assessment practice and expectations of progress are not always shared across primary and secondary teaching teams. Discussions with parents about pupils' next steps also inform target-setting. However, for a small number of pupils, the review of their education, health and care plans is currently overdue by several months.
- The school's pupil premium strategy details how the funding is spent but does not include the outcomes towards pupils achieving their targets. In the long term, the school's use of funding has helped disadvantaged pupils to progress well from their starting points. However, information and data collected by the school are not supporting governors well enough to question and evaluate the difference it is making for disadvantaged pupils. In addition, the school does not identify outcomes for the most able pupils, to check how well this group achieve.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- assessment information is used consistently to inform teachers' planning, and enables them to set targets for all pupils that are challenging and sharply focused on their next steps in learning
- structured assessment underpins target-setting for pupils, and supports transition between primary and secondary phases, and between the secondary phase and sixth form
- senior leaders provide a clear steer about assessment, so that there are clear expectations of progression in pupils' achievement between one phase and the next.

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

Yours sincerely

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Meetings were held with you and your deputy headteachers to discuss and agree the key lines of enquiry for the inspection. We also met with governors and the chair of governors, senior leaders, teachers and pupils. I also met with a representative from the local authority. Inspectors met with parents to hear their views, as there were few responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. We visited classes in all phases and key stages of the school. We also observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at social times. We met with a large group of pupils and students over lunch and looked at samples of work. We viewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of pupils' achievement and their plans for developing the school. We considered a number of other documents, including those relating to monitoring and evaluation of teaching, learning, attendance and safeguarding.