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Ms Jane Goodman
Deputy headteacher
Doncaster School for the Deaf
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Dear Ms Goodman

Short inspection of Doncaster School for the Deaf

Following my visit to the school on 15 May 2018 with Tudor Griffiths, 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 January 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

You are a dedicated and committed school leader and you have successfully kept the school as a safe and welcoming place for your pupils and their families. Your staff team is highly skilled and motivated in providing the best possible experiences for pupils. Staff understanding and use of British Sign Language (BSL) to engage and communicate with your pupils provides opportunities for pupils to access the full curriculum. Staff are proud to work at the school and you support them well.

High-quality teaching, learning and assessment are accelerating the progress of current pupils. Teachers plan exciting and interesting activities in lessons and high-quality resources are used to stimulate and engage pupils. Teachers know pupils very well and adapt their teaching skilfully to meet pupils' individual needs. All staff use questioning well and the pace of learning in lessons contributes to securing pupils' concentration in lessons. Staff have high expectations and provide appropriate challenge to pupils throughout the lessons. This challenge extends knowledge and helps pupils progress well.

Pupils thrive at your school. They enjoy coming to school each day and their delight and enjoyment in their learning is clear to see. They are happy and feel safe. They enjoy the varied enrichment opportunities that you offer to them and understand that these experiences prepare them for dealing with life outside school. Pupils are polite, respectful, courteous and welcoming to visitors. They are proud of their

school.

The school environment is secure and very well looked after. There are a range of exciting opportunities for play and exploration of outside areas. The way in which pupils move around school is calm and lunchtimes are harmonious, with positive interaction between younger and older pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team, with governors, ensures that all arrangements to safeguard pupils and keep them safe are effective and fit for purpose. The importance that you and governors give to keeping every pupil safe generates a culture of safeguarding, seen in the vigilance and actions of your staff.

Leaders ensure that all relevant checks that are required for those working with children are in place. Staff receive regular and effective training and are up to date with current legislation. They are clear and confident on procedures they must follow if they have any concerns.

You ensure that pupils learn about their safety and risks to their well-being. You prioritise internet safety, recognising the frequent use of technology by your pupils. Pupils know how important it is to keep personal details safe. They understand the importance of reporting any inappropriate incidents that occur.

Parents feel that their children are safe in school. The culture of keeping pupils safe and putting them at the heart of the school community is very evident.

Inspection findings

- Improved attainment and progress is due to high-quality teaching, which is reflected in school data. Teachers use assessment accurately to monitor pupils' progress. Pupils respond well to the regular challenges that teachers provide. Highly skilled teaching assistants enable pupils to receive close and effective guidance during lessons. All staff have high expectations of pupils and use effective strategies to support them. Teachers and teaching assistants use a wide range of questioning techniques to test and challenge pupils.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are exemplary. Staff know and understand each pupil and respond to their individual needs successfully. Pupils trust and respect staff and are secure that they will provide support when necessary.
- Pupils make strong progress from their starting points, particularly younger pupils who may arrive at the school after prolonged periods out of education. Staff quickly and accurately assess pupils and provide any additional support required. This may involve the teaching of BSL to a recognisable level or by encouraging acceptance and importance of their special educational needs.
- The school has valuable data to reflect individual pupil attendance. Leaders are rigorous in ensuring that all pupils attend school each day. You understand the need for frequent medical appointments for some pupils and support them with

additional learning when necessary.

- Behaviour around school and in lessons is positive. Pupils state that generally behaviour is good. If they are having difficulty, staff will always support them to 'get back on track'.
- The primary curriculum is well planned, with a broad range of subjects covered, including deaf studies. This is an essential subject for the pupils and includes deaf identity, communication, deaf community and culture, deaf history and social change. This subject provides pupils with a sense of belonging and pride in the deaf community and enables them to understand the part they play in society.
- The secondary curriculum offer is broad and responds to the requirements of individual pupils. There is some flexibility each year as pupils can request access to subjects that are of interest to them. These are in addition to a strong English and mathematics curriculum. The leadership meets the needs of the curriculum by using flexible, skilled part-time staff.
- Leaders have addressed areas for improvement successfully. Teachers now plan carefully and challenge pupils in lessons.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school. However, the plans for school improvement are broad and not specific or targeted enough. This means that leaders do not always show positive impact on improving outcomes for pupils. Leaders do not always ensure that a strategic level of continuous school improvement is in place.
- School governors are passionate about the school. They strive to provide the best experiences for the pupils. They dedicate a great deal of time to the school and their time spent in school is reflected in their knowledge of the day-to-day processes and running of the school. However, governors do not have a thorough enough understanding of the strengths of the school or the areas for improvement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvement plans clearly show the intended impact that actions will have on pupils' progress
- governors gain a greater strategic oversight by engaging more frequently with other leaders across the school to understand and evaluate the impact of their work
- school leaders further develop their understanding of school improvement at a strategic level.

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

Yours sincerely

Sara Roe
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we held meetings with you, your senior leaders and a group of your staff. We also met with a group of pupils, governors and members of the trust. Together with you and other leaders, we visited all classrooms to observe teaching and to look at pupils' work. Consideration was given to four responses from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the school's own information and 21 staff surveys. We evaluated recent information in relation to pupils' progress, the school's own self-evaluation document, the school improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings, behaviour and attendance records, and information about safeguarding.