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Mrs Sue Haithwaite  
Headteacher  
Chellow Heights Special School  
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West Yorkshire  
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Dear Mrs Haithwaite

### **Short inspection of Chellow Heights Special School**

Following my visit to the school on 23 May 2018 with Louise Greatrex, 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 November 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Chellow Heights provides pupils with a safe, caring and happy learning environment. Underpinning all of the school's work is your commitment to meeting the needs of each pupil. High expectations abound in the school. This is reflected in the curriculum, which offers a wealth of carefully planned learning opportunities. These opportunities enable each pupil to develop their knowledge and skills well. This aids them to fulfil their potential. Parents are highly supportive of the school. Two parents summed up the views of many. One described how the school 'made a huge difference' to the life experiences of children. The other said that the school caters so well for their child's needs that 'My child would come to school seven days a week if he could.'

You have worked hard to manage a time of great change, as the school has grown rapidly and is now situated on two sites. Throughout this time, you, other leaders, and governors, have worked effectively to maintain a 'school spirit' that is reflected by staff who are proud to be working at Chellow Heights. Teaching and support staff work in cohesive teams to plan and check on the progress and welfare of pupils. There is a tangible warmth to the supportive relationships that exist between pupils and staff. Pupils are keen to share their positive opinions about the school. They say they feel safe and that bullying is very rare. Behaviour is good and staff are always there to help them to do their best.

As the headteacher, you have built on many of the school's strengths since the previous inspection and have addressed the areas for improvement successfully. You have

continued to play an active role in the Bradford district achievement partnership for pupils with complex needs and the Yorkshire special school leadership group. This has aided the school's development of an assessment system that has common aspects across the special schools in Bradford and enables moderation of standards to take place. This work has increased your expectations of the amount of progress that pupils can make. You are supported well by other leaders, and governors have broadened their commitment to developing good practice in special education across the area. The establishment of an outreach programme for mainstream schools and the offer of initial teacher training is beneficial to this work.

Another area for improvement from the previous inspection that has been addressed thoroughly is the work of middle leaders. Middle leaders are actively involved in checking and supporting the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Training is a strength of the school and you have enabled middle leaders to develop specialisms and skills that have aided their ability to bring about positive change, for example in developing challenge for the most able and in the quality of writing activities on offer to pupils. You have created time in the 'cocktail hour' and 'talking tiffin' to enable support staff to be fully involved in the planning of topic work, daily preparation, reflection and checking activities. This has created strong, effective working teams in which all adults know their pupils very well. They understand how best to support them to achieve their next steps in learning.

You have admirably managed the challenges that a significant increase in pupil numbers has brought. The effective use of induction, mentoring, and pairing with experienced staff is aiding the large number of newly appointed teachers and support staff to blend well into the working environment. Newly appointed staff speak highly of the support and training that your team provide. This support and training are ensuring that staff can meet the high expectations of the school. Alongside this, you have also restructured the leadership team to ensure that there is the capacity to manage the provision effectively across two sites and maintain the good quality of education. You are aware that the skills of the newly appointed leaders are still developing and have a clear coaching and training programme in place to support them. As the school continues to grow, you have been required to accept pupils with increasingly complex and demanding needs. You have recently opened a social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) assessment unit. This is an example of your continuing development of staff skills and expertise to meet the challenges of teaching pupils who are beginning to access the national curriculum.

Your governors are passionate about the school, with governors' minutes reflecting consistent support and challenge to the leadership team. They take an active role in ensuring that the school development plan reflects the priorities of this changing school. Statutory policies are updated on a regular basis and ratified by the governing body. However, the governors have not kept a watchful eye on the school website, the contents of which do not reflect their usually diligent work, as some policies are not up to date.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

Staff, parents and pupils told me that they feel safe in school. All pupils are cared for well. The health and sensitive welfare needs of individual pupils are fulfilled with respect. Pupils recognise the wide range of care they receive, including when being transported to and from school. A pupil reflected that the 'bus escorts help me' and in having their dietary needs fully met 'they do the best puddings'.

Leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have established a culture in which all members of staff know and take responsibility for safeguarding. All staff show understanding of the safeguarding issues that arise among pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Staff are vigilant to changes to pupils' behaviours and communicate concerns in a timely manner.

You work closely with a wide range of external agencies so that pupils access the support necessary to keep them safe and well looked after. Your home and hospital tutor teaches and supports pupils when they are too poorly to attend school. At present, the tutor and the home school service cannot provide full-time education for these pupils. However, the tutor maintains close contact with families to check on well-being and safety.

## **Inspection findings**

- The inspection focused on four key lines of enquiry. The first of these was to look at how effectively you ensure that middle leaders check on both the quality of teaching and learning and the use of support staff. You have developed 'teacher on a page' profiles which leaders complete. These show that leaders are actively monitoring the breadth and quality of teaching and learning. While in lessons, we observed how well teaching assistants provide effective support. It is clear that they understand the needs of each pupil and how to help them engage well in learning activities. Some staff, who are new to the school, are still learning how to communicate fluently with pupils who do not speak.
- In response to the second line of enquiry, the chair of governors described how the governing body supports and challenges the school. For example, you are put into the 'hot seat' three times during each academic year and governors ask questions to explore an area of development, such as the use and impact of pupil premium funding. Focused governor visits also allow them to check the information they receive from you and give them insight into the day-to-day life of the school. During the inspection, the governors committed to ensuring that the website will be regularly monitored so that it meets all requirements.
- My third line of enquiry explored the intent and impact of the curriculum on meeting the complex needs of the pupils. You have reviewed the structure of the curriculum. Leaders explained how the skills-based, creative curriculum is based on the areas of development found within the Department for Education's early years framework. A carefully planned variety of activities cover a wide range of subjects and enable breadth and balance to be provided. Planning is shared across the whole classroom team so that individual pupils' needs and interests can be met. For example, some

pupils benefit from a highly sensory education, while others gain greatly from hydro sessions or music and art therapy within their personal timetables. 'Wow' opportunities, regularly with a music and dance influence, are used effectively to enhance engagement and pupils' interest. Throughout the school, you focus on promoting the key life skills of communication, physical development, and personal, social and emotional development to aid independence and pupils' next stage in education.

- Finally, we looked at how you use assessment to support pupils' progress in a consistent way over the two sites. Across the school, there is clarity over how pupils are precisely assessed. You closely check the progress that each pupil is making on a termly basis. Pupils' learning is recorded in 'learning journals' in the early years and 'learning adventures' in key stages 1 and 2. These records include detailed observations of learning. Careful, considered assessment is made that informs 'next steps' for each area of learning. These 'next steps' represent an appropriate level of challenge for individual pupils; they inform the planning for personal timetables and are actively used to influence the specific delivery of activities in the classroom. The school is working to meet the challenge of assessing the learning of pupils in the SEMH assessment unit, which opened in January 2018, as aspects of their cognitive development extend beyond the early years framework.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the skills and practice of all staff, including the significant number of recently appointed teaching and support staff, reflect the very best that are in the school
- they develop assessment systems and procedures to include national curriculum objectives for SEMH pupils in the assessment unit
- the website is fully up to date and meets all the Department for Education's requirements
- the school makes every effort to ensure that pupils on home tuition have a full-time education.

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

Yours sincerely

Fiona Dixon  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors met with you, your deputy headteachers and middle leaders. I also met with the chair of the governing body and a group of staff, which included teachers and teaching assistants. An inspector visited the south site. We met formally with a group of pupils and talked informally with others around the school.

Leaders accompanied us on all visits to classes, where we observed a range of learning activities. I worked with your two deputy headteachers to look at work produced by pupils.

Inspectors looked at the school's website and carefully checked a wide range of documents including the school development plan, the self-evaluation document and documents relating to safeguarding.

We considered 91 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. There were no responses to the pupil survey. We talked to parents at the end of the school day and considered the nine comments received by Ofsted's free-text facility. Nine responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were recorded.