

10 September 2018

Mrs Lea Mason
Executive Headteacher
St Bernard's School
Wood Lane
Louth
Lincolnshire
LN11 8RS

Dear Mrs Mason

Short inspection of St Bernard's School

Following my visit to the school on 11 July 2018 with John Edwards, 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 academy conversion in September 2015.

This school continues to be good.

School leaders have maintained a good standard of education since the predecessor school was inspected. St Bernard's school is one of two special schools in the Lincolnshire Wolds Trust. You are rightly proud of your school and want a personalised curriculum for all learners. The school's vision to 'provide an inspiring, purposeful and personalised education for all every day' is an important aim for school leaders, teachers and pupils. The school community works hard to help pupils to achieve and be ready for their next steps in education.

You have worked hard to make the curriculum relevant to pupils. It is strong and demonstrates progression through the key stages. The school meets the individual needs of pupils and the quality of teaching and learning has become stronger. Teachers' planning is a particular strength of the school.

You lead and inspire a caring and committed school community. The result is a school that cares for and nurtures its pupils. There is a strong emphasis on personal development and welfare. This helps pupils to develop their self-esteem and independence. You are well supported by a professional staff team which ensures that academic progress is closely monitored. The result is that pupils make good progress from their starting points.

It is a pleasure to walk around the school. Pupils are polite and there is a great deal of friendly and positive talk between teachers and pupils. Corridors and classrooms are calm and there is an orderly and productive learning environment. Pupils are

known well by all staff and their behaviour is good. You work extremely hard to make sure pupils are cared for and you are rightly proud of your pupils and staff.

There have recently been planned changes involving the recruitment of a new head of school. School leaders have been quick to recognise existing talent and have supported a smooth transition process. The result is that the school has a new head of school with no disruption on the learning of pupils. The strong governance of the school enables you to lead it well.

Many parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, said that they were pleased their children attended the school, their children were achieving well, receiving good support from their teachers and enjoyed a wealth of activities.

You have ensured that previous areas for improvement have been fully addressed from the predecessor school. The school ethos is a positive one that is embraced by middle leaders and staff across the school. Leaders and governors have ensured that the monitoring of pupils' progress has had a positive impact on learning. Staff feel supported through the comprehensive development opportunities offered by the school. This has been central to the development of St Bernard's as a good school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding procedures are comprehensive, fit for purpose and of a high quality. As I walked around St Bernard's school I noticed high levels of care and support. Highly skilled staff are sensitive in their approach to the individual needs of pupils. Staff-training logs are up to date and reflect the needs of pupils. Staff are well trained and know how to raise any safeguarding concerns. Referrals are acted upon in a timely manner, with action taken in line with policy guidelines.

The strength of relationships between staff and pupils is positive.

Pupils' attendance is closely monitored. The complexity of recent students' needs has been a contributory factor in some pupils' low attendance at school. You should review how you monitor absence, due to a lack of impact of existing systems.

Inspection findings

- Middle leaders can clearly articulate the strengths of the school and the next steps required for further improvement. High-quality training and staff development are strong across the federation of schools. Staff take responsibility for pupils' progress and monitoring of targets over time. This is at the heart of leaders' planning. School leaders have been creative in ensuring that stronger members of staff are well developed and retained.
- Staff feel that the induction of a new head of school has gone well. Leaders across the federation have supported this process. Leaders, including

governors, are reflective practitioners. Staff remain calm and professional and genuinely care. Professional development is personalised for staff and closely monitored using effective systems. The team ethos has helped to move the school forwards.

- Leaders have ensured that pupils' progress is closely monitored. This has contributed to pupils making good progress. Further refining of systems will be required over time. School systems ensure that pupils assess themselves effectively and are aware of what they need to do next in order to improve their work. Leaders ensure that pupils receive effective feedback so that they can succeed.
- Leaders ensure that all pupils achieve well regardless of their starting points or whether they are disadvantaged. Governors are kept well informed and take a keen interest in pupils' progress and school developments. Learning is personalised for all pupils, with a strong emphasis on meeting their social and emotional needs.
- Teachers demonstrate genuine empathy and understanding of pupils' needs. The 14 to 19 curriculum has been carefully planned and implemented to develop pupils' independent skills and prepares them for adulthood. All pupils observed interacted positively with each other and staff. They demonstrated a genuine love of learning at St Bernard's. Pupils demonstrated an ability to assess themselves, monitoring their own behaviour, in line with teachers' expectations.
- Leaders plan meticulously so that pupils can meet their education, health and care (EHC) plan targets, which are shared with pupils and parents regularly. Support staff are highly skilled and valued members of the school community. What they do makes a difference. Staff encourage pupils and are clearly trusted. No examples were seen of inappropriate behaviour and good, cooperative behaviour was observed at all times.
- Pupils enjoy their learning. Their independent skills are being developed appropriately, leading to successful outcomes over time. New qualifications are planned for in order to recognise pupils' progress in the new academic year. Restorative practice develops skills and empathy among pupils.
- Behaviour for learning is at the heart of all practice. Leaders have created a purposeful and caring learning environment where the norm is to learn. The personalised curriculum gives pupils the best chance possible to succeed in achieving their EHC plan targets, leading to strong outcomes.
- Governors are knowledgeable and passionate about providing the best provision for pupils. They are relentless in their pursuit of excellence. They know the school and its priorities for the future. Along with the executive headteacher, they want the best for their pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they further refine assessment systems to ensure that pupils of all abilities can make strong progress
- they scrutinise the monitoring of attendance while ensuring that the school is providing the support pupils need to attend as regularly as possible
- they ensure that pupils have access to a wide range of qualifications to enable them to fulfil their potential.

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

Yours sincerely

Jason Brooks
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, the executive headteacher, the assistant headteacher and middle leaders, including leaders for English and mathematics. Inspectors held meetings with small groups of teachers and support staff. They observed learning throughout the school with leaders and reviewed pupils' work and communicated with pupils. Inspectors met with the chair of the trust and other members of the governing body. They spoke with pupils. The lead inspector checked records with the assistant headteacher and human resources lead and reviewed procedures for keeping children safe. They studied the school development plan and the school's self-evaluation. The lead inspector considered the views of 13 parents who replied to Parent View.