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Mrs Amanda Costello
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Costello

Short inspection of Bents Green School

Following my visit to the school on 25 September 2018 with Tricia Stevens, 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 your 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 since the last inspection. You and your leaders are constantly seeking ways to improve the work of school. You have a clear focus on preparing your pupils for adulthood, and this is shared by all your staff.

Your school has a friendly atmosphere. Pupils very much enjoy attending Bents Green. They are proud of their school and told me that they 'enjoy all their lessons'. Throughout the day, staff support pupils to communicate and interact with one another. At lunchtime, pupils explore and have fun in the wonderful school grounds. Areas are zoned to allow every pupil a place to play and socialise with their friends. As a result, pupils develop strong friendships with one another.

Inspectors identified two areas for improvement at the last inspection: to further improve the quality of teaching and to inform parents and carers more fully of all that the school does. You invest in staff training and development, and support teachers to evaluate and improve their teaching. This ensures that teachers meet the needs of all the learners within the school. You keep parents well informed in a number of ways including the school's website, letters home and regular meetings. As a result, parents feel supported by school staff.

You have recently reviewed your curriculum and timetables to ensure that pupils in Years 7 and 8 have the continuity of teaching support that they need. You continue to provide a broad curriculum that has at its heart a focus on the personal and social

development of your pupils. Across every week, you plan opportunities for pupils to develop their independence and life skills. This is particularly strong in post-16, where pupils undertake independent travel programmes and work experience, and learn skills such as shopping, cooking and cleaning.

A group of key stage 3 and 4 pupils study full time at the Hub at a local secondary school. The pupils told inspectors that they enjoy their lessons and feel safe there. Pupils at the Hub achieve strong outcomes at the end of Year 11. One pupil told inspectors, 'I am doing five GCSEs; the teachers are nice and give me support.'

Parents are positive about most aspects of your school. They describe the many welcome changes in their children since starting at Bents Green. They praise the school for the support they have received. One parent commented, 'It's the best thing I have done sending my daughter here.' Another parent acknowledged that the school went, 'over and above' to support her son when he had some difficulties.

You invest in developing your school leaders and have an outreach team and specialist school leaders who support colleagues in other schools. Your staff appreciate this investment and are passionate about school improvement and securing the best possible outcomes for pupils. The school-to-school support programme work is much appreciated by the local authority.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The well-maintained register of staff pre-employment checks meets all legal requirements. You and your staff are knowledgeable about your pupils and the local risks. Staff training about safeguarding and child protection is extensive and refreshed regularly. You work with a range of external agencies to support children in need. As a result, you take prompt action to keep pupils safe and to protect them from harm. Staff support and manage pupils' behaviour well. You keep detailed records of incidents and physical restraints and these show that the longer pupils are at Bents Green, the more settled their behaviour due to the support and care they receive from staff.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school, and that a staff member or a friend is always there to help if they have a problem. Pupils learn how to stay safe; for example, they are aware of the risks when using the internet, and have undertaken a road safety awareness programme. This helps them to be well prepared for the next stage of their lives.

Inspection findings

- Training for teachers ensures that they offer the correct support for pupils with autism, including visual support, simple verbal instruction and sensory regulation resources. For example, pupils had access to ear defenders, fidget toys and

movement cushions, meaning pupils are able to concentrate well and produce long pieces of written work.

- Pupils' learning is at its best when teachers plan activities that are interesting, personalised to the pupils, and have the right amount of challenge. For example, in one lesson pupils composed a soundtrack to a film. They questioned the teacher, reflected on the film's content and were keen to create an exciting soundtrack. However, this is not consistent throughout the school. At times, the pace of learning is slower, pupils wait too long for their turn, and activities are not clear to students or matched to their needs. Addressing these inconsistencies in the quality of teaching is an important next step.
- You have set yourself an ambitious target for attendance and have put in place many strategies to support regular attendance. These are beginning to make a difference in improving pupils' attendance.
- School leaders have worked hard on developing a positive approach to support pupils who have emotional and behaviour difficulties. Leaders recognise though that the number of fixed-term exclusions of pupils from the school are still too high, and are developing further approaches to help provide even more emotional support for pupils. One example of this is the sensory base in school that pupils can access for support throughout the day.
- Given their low starting points, pupils achieve strong outcomes at the end of key stage 4 in a range of accredited qualifications. School leaders analyse pupil progress at regular intervals. If pupils start to fall behind, the school provides extra support to boost their learning.
- The school is currently developing a new assessment system that allows teachers to have live assessment data and to show progress for all learners in the school. This is not fully embedded into teachers' practice and therefore is not being used to inform all planning of lessons.
- Pupils are supported extremely well as they move through the school and when they leave the school. This starts from the support Year 7 pupils receive when they start at school right across all phases of the school. Pupils seamlessly move from the main school to colleges or the post-16 provision which is at a different site, with all of the students moving onto well-matched adult placements.
- You have a detailed plan for how you spend additional funding to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and those who need help to catch up. You have used this funding to support a large number of areas, including sensory support, behaviour support and wider curriculum opportunities. An example of this is the alpaca farm that some pupils visit weekly to support the development of their communication skills. These initiatives are evaluated and their effect on improving outcomes for pupils is evident across the school.
- The governing body is a strong team, which has the knowledge and skills to both challenge and move the school forward. Governors are passionate in their desire for the school to be a 'centre of excellence'. They have tackled budgetary issues

effectively and have supported school leaders in recent changes to staffing and the curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they improve teaching to ensure that it is of the highest quality across the school
- they embed the school's new system of assessment to ensure that it supports teachers and pupils effectively
- they reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions.

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

Yours sincerely

Bernadette Moorcroft
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

We met with you and your senior and middle leaders, three representatives from the governing body and a group of pupils. We observed teaching, learning and assessment in lessons with senior leaders. We visited the multisite provision at Sheaf Training and Westfield School. We looked at the work in pupils' books and talked to pupils about their learning. We considered the results from Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 12 written responses from parents. We examined a range of documents including information about safeguarding, the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan and information about pupils' progress.