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Mrs Denise Fountain
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Fountain

Short inspection of The Dame Ellen Pinsent School

Following my visit to the school on 19 September 2018 with Andrea Quigley, 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 outstanding in December 2013.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders put their pupils at the heart of everything they do. You have taken effective action to continue to develop and improve the experiences on offer to pupils at Dame Ellen Pinsent.

Leadership at all levels of the school is strong. You have a dedicated team that is enthusiastic and has worked together to build on the school's outstanding practice. The range of pupils' special educational needs has changed over time. Despite these changes, you and your staff have maintained high expectations and aspirations for all your pupils. Your school evaluation is very accurate and identifies the school's strengths and needs. You and other leaders understand clearly the aspects of the school's work that you need to focus on.

Leaders have effectively addressed the areas for development identified at the previous inspection. You have introduced a variety of homework pathways for pupils in different classes. Pupils are motivated by the 'Golden Ticket' reward scheme to bring their homework back. Parents and carers appreciate the way this helps involve them in their child's learning. You have introduced strategies to encourage pupils to attend every day, and supported parents when pupils' attendance has dipped. The impact of this work has been to increase attendance each year since the last inspection.

Teaching is outstanding because teachers plan carefully to meet the individual needs of pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants work together very well to move

learning on in lessons. They use resources and activities skilfully to provide interest and appropriate challenge for pupils. This teaching helps pupils make good progress in a range of subjects. Staff say they are proud to work at Dame Ellen Pinsent. They have excellent relationships with pupils and understand their pupils' individual needs well.

Dame Ellen Pinsent is a happy and positive place to be. Pupils thrive in the environment you have created and enjoy their lessons. They can explain what they are learning and how this will help them meet their personal targets. In lessons and at less structured times, such as breaktime and lunchtime, pupils are polite and show respect for each other. They are positive about school and the support they receive from the adults working with them.

Parents are highly positive about the school. They appreciate the difference it is making to the lives of their children. The majority of parents who completed questionnaires and those who spoke to inspectors at the start of the day were highly positive about the school. A typical quote was: 'I am extremely happy and proud to say my child attends this excellent school.'

Governance is strong. Governors are committed to ensuring that the school continues to provide an excellent education for all its pupils. They offer appropriate challenge and support to school leaders. They are experienced and knowledgeable, and ensure that the school has the necessary resources and strategic direction it needs to maintain the quality of education. They play a full part in moving the school forward. They have committed to a cooperative federation with eight other special schools in Birmingham which will help to sustain the future of the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and there is a very strong safeguarding culture at Dame Ellen Pinsent. In recognition of the additional needs and vulnerabilities of your pupils, you ensure that protecting pupils and keeping them safe are key priorities for everyone.

Safeguarding training is regularly provided for all staff and is backed up by weekly safeguarding briefings. As a result, all staff are confident about what to do and whom to contact when they have any concerns. Appropriate procedures are in place for staff to register all concerns and senior leaders follow these up immediately. There are clear protocols for dealing with pupils who are absent from school. When there have been safeguarding incidents, school leaders have followed their own and the local authority's procedures fully. Records of individual cases are detailed and thorough.

Staff throughout the school teach pupils about the potential risks and dangers they might face. As a result, you keep pupils safe in school, and when they are online or on school visits. Pupils said they feel safe and well looked after at school. They are confident they can bring concerns to staff, who will sort everything out for them.

Inspection findings

- School leaders and teachers ensure that they have a detailed and accurate profile of the abilities and needs of all pupils who join the school. Teachers set challenging and ambitious targets in core subjects for pupils and the vast majority of pupils achieve, and even exceed, them. The most recently available national progression guidance is used to set targets and evaluate pupils' progress. Leaders acknowledge that the school's current systems do not always allow them to account for the wide variety of abilities in the school, nor to present a clear picture of the progress pupils are making across all areas of the curriculum.
- The school is a vibrant learning community. During the inspection, pupils looked happy and were enjoying themselves. The recently built classroom block and external learning areas have been designed, and are being used, to extend learning opportunities. You have adapted the curriculum offer to meet the changing needs of your pupils, including introducing specialist classes. This is ensuring that pupils' specific needs are being met in appropriate spaces.
- School staff understand their pupils very well and recognise pupils' behaviour as a means of communication. They are very skilful at managing and supporting pupils with their behaviour and, as a consequence, incidents of poor behaviour are infrequent. Staff provide effective support for pupils to help them develop their communication and language skills, and the pupils coming into school increasingly need this. In response, you have put a range of support measures in place, including employing a speech and language therapist and assistants. This has increased the opportunities pupils have to take part in learning in the classroom.
- School leaders make sure that all of the additional funding that the school receives has a marked impact on outcomes for pupils. Careful analysis of last year's spending has been used to set clear targets for this year's support to meet individual pupils' needs as identified in their education, health and care plans.
- Pupils' attendance is very good. Overall, their attendance is equal to the national average for all schools, and is above the national average for similar schools. Persistent absenteeism is low and this reflects the impact of the school's work and the support from parents and carers to maintain high levels of attendance. There have been no fixed-term exclusions from school in the past school year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to develop assessment across the school, so they can clearly demonstrate the progress being made by pupils in all areas of learning
- they adapt the curriculum creatively to meet the changing needs of pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Robert Roalfe
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

To explore the main lines of enquiry for this inspection, inspectors:

- met with you, senior leaders, the school staff and a group of governors, and spoke to an external adviser for the school from Birmingham Education Partnership
- met with parents at the beginning of the school day to discuss their children's welfare and progress
- spoke with pupils around school and met with a group of pupils to discuss their learning and experience of school
- met with staff formally and informally to discuss the school's progress since the last inspection
- visited lessons for all 12 classes in school on at least one occasion during the day, some with senior leaders
- scrutinised a range of documents, including: work in pupils' books; homework folders; teachers' planning files; curriculum folders; the single central record; safeguarding documents; records for attendance, exclusions, behaviour and physical interventions; and the school's system for measuring pupils' progress
- considered the views of the seven parents who contacted Ofsted through the online questionnaire, Parent view, the replies of parents to the school's own questionnaire last term, and the 32 responses to the online staff questionnaire; there were no responses from pupils to the online pupil questionnaire.