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Mrs Karen Saywood
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Saywood

Short inspection of Braidwood School for the Deaf

Following my visit to the school on 17 October 2018 with Ofsted Inspector Kim Ellis, 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Staff work well together for the benefit of the pupils and have created a positive climate for learning. They know the pupils well. The caring and productive relationships between leaders, staff and young people support the good progress that pupils make in the school.

You lead a strong and cohesive leadership team. Leaders and governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and collectively you have taken effective action to further improve the quality of provision. Leaders have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection.

The quality of teaching has improved. Staff usually make effective use of information about what pupils know to plan work that is set at the appropriate level of challenge. Staff use probing questions and other means of communication to promote pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. They allow time for pupils to consolidate their learning when appropriate but move them on quickly when the situation requires it.

Over time, pupils with more complex needs have not been as effectively supported or challenged as other pupils to deepen their knowledge or develop their independence. As a result of training on how to improve the provision for these pupils, staff now consider how pupils are responding to learning more

closely. They usually modify their approaches accordingly. However, as the new systems and structures for educating pupils with more complex needs are not fully embedded, this is not yet done consistently.

Staff help pupils to develop communication skills by using British Sign Language (BSL), written and spoken English and other appropriate signs and symbols. Staff are in regular contact with families to help develop communication skills. The school's website is of a high quality and the school has provided electronic equipment to help families and young people communicate more effectively. School leaders have plans in place to help parents and carers refresh their skills in BSL. This is an important piece of work to aid communication.

The vast majority of pupils make good progress in a range of subjects in every year group. English is taught well, and staff take opportunities to develop literacy in other subjects. However, as outcomes in writing do not match those in reading, speaking and listening, leaders have correctly identified improving pupils' progress in writing as a key area for development.

Post-16 provision in the school has expanded since the time of the last inspection. Students are effectively prepared for their next steps and all students move on to appropriate destinations. However, the curriculum is still developing, and students do not benefit from the opportunity to complete a wide selection of accredited courses.

Pupils are proud of their school and behave well in class and during social times. They are polite, friendly, responsible and happy. Staff support the pupils well and promote positive mental health and well-being effectively. Pupils have no concerns about bullying and they feel safe. However, they rarely mix with pupils at the neighbouring mainstream school. This is a missed opportunity for both groups of pupils to communicate and develop friendships.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. This aspect of the school's work is well led and there is a strong culture for keeping children safe throughout the school.

All staff are well trained and kept up to date about safeguarding issues. Leaders and staff have a thorough understanding of their responsibilities and they consciously consider the welfare of pupils in all that they do.

Processes for reporting issues are clear and known by staff. Referrals are timely, and appropriate action is taken if required. Leaders follow up concerns tenaciously.

Pupils, staff and parents believe that pupils are safe. There are established procedures in the school to keep pupils safe and pupils are taught about staying safe in an appropriate way. For example, they learn about personal safety and

how to remain safe when using the internet. Pupils who spoke to inspectors were very clear about the procedures that the school has in place to help them stay safe online.

Inspection findings

- There are examples of strong teaching, learning and assessment practice throughout the school. Staff have good subject knowledge and challenge pupils, particularly the most able, to make sustained progress. Staff use their positive relationships with the pupils to plan and resource activities that interest and engage the young people. Often, staff carefully demonstrate what they want pupils to do and encourage them to work productively together to overcome difficulties. This promotes personal development and a range of academic skills. Teaching assistants are well deployed, and visual and vibrant displays celebrate successes and are used to aid learning. However, teaching is not consistently of the highest standard.
- Leaders have taken action designed to improve provision and outcomes for pupils who have more complex needs. Staff have had additional training, the curriculum has been adapted and a range of interventions are in place. Pupils are taught in smaller groups and small steps of progress are celebrated. However, expectations are not yet high enough so pupils who have more complex needs are not challenged as much as other pupils to make strong progress. Practical resources are not used consistently to aid learning and staff do not record clear next steps for learning for individual pupils who have complex needs that can be shared with other staff and parents.
- The vast majority of pupils achieve very positive outcomes at the school. They make good progress in a range of subjects and their social and emotional development is promoted well. Pupils produce high-quality artwork and attain good outcomes in reading, speaking and listening and mathematics. However, as a result of low starting points and a lack of opportunities for pupils to write at length, outcomes in writing do not match those in other subjects.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and tailored to meet the needs of groups and individuals. It is enriched by a range of trips and activities that help to prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils take part in residential visits and, last year, every Year 11 pupil gained the bronze or silver Duke of Edinburgh's Award.
- Good-quality careers education and impartial information, advice and guidance help all pupils move on to appropriate destinations when they leave the school. Staff encourage pupils to think about a wide range of future careers.
- Post-16 provision is improving. The curriculum covers English, mathematics, personal development, careers education and work-related learning. It promotes healthy lifestyles, personal safety and fundamental British values. Provision in the sixth form helps to prepare pupils well for college.
- Post-16 students support younger pupils and make a positive contribution to the life of the school. They develop personal, social, employability and independent learning skills through non-qualification enrichment activities.

However, despite some positive outcomes, the range of accredited qualifications that they achieve is narrow.

- Pupils behave well, and incidents of inappropriate behaviour happen infrequently. Fixed-term exclusions are declining, and permanent exclusions are very rare. Staff help pupils to conduct themselves well.
- Attendance improved last year and has remained close to the national average since then. Apart from pupils who have particular medical needs, all groups of pupils have similar attendance levels. Systems for following up absence are robust, and staff support parents effectively to promote the importance of regular attendance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- effective action is taken to improve outcomes in writing
- post-16 provision continues to improve by embedding current developments and widening accreditation opportunities
- systems and structures to develop the provision for pupils who have more complex needs are embedded to further improve their outcomes
- pupils are given more opportunities to communicate with local young people and adults, including their parents, who are not deaf.

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

Simon Mosley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator and the business manager. Staff were spoken to informally and 25 responses to the staff questionnaire were also considered. The lead inspector spoke to the vice-chair of the governing body and to an external consultant linked to the school.

Short visits were made to all classrooms with senior leaders. Inspectors spoke to pupils formally and informally and analysed 41 responses to the pupil

questionnaire. Behaviour was observed at the start of the day, in lessons and during social times.

There were not enough responses to Parent View for the results to be analysed. Inspectors considered two free-text comments and spoke to three parents during the inspection.

Various school documents were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance. Documents relating to safeguarding were checked and the lead inspector looked at published information on the school's website.