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Mrs Gail Lawton
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Lawton

Short inspection of Kings Mill School

Following my visit to the school on 24 October 2018 with Suzette Garland-Grimes, 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 January 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

The staff, governing body and parents strongly support your vision that 'learning for life' is the key principle that runs through the curriculum. This is evidenced in development of pupils' personal and independence skills, the opportunities for travel training (learning to travel independently in the community), the emphasis on the development of pupils' practical skills in literacy and numeracy and the wide range of accredited courses provided for older pupils. Pupils have the opportunity to practise their independence skills in the many residential visits that take place each year. Parents greatly appreciate the commitment of the staff who take part in these activities.

Parents told inspectors that you are a dedicated headteacher and that they value your leadership and the support provided by your staff. They highly value the partnership that they have with their child's class team and the regular home-school communication. Parents told inspectors that they feel valued partners in their child's education and that staff listen to, and respect, their views about what is important for their child. One parent said, 'I cannot praise the school enough. The excellent teaching, care and dedication of the staff has resulted in my daughter making fantastic progress since she joined the school.' Another parent added, 'My child has changed dramatically since starting this school, I cannot thank them enough!'

At the heart of the school is your commitment to meeting the needs of every pupil. This is evidenced in the approach that leaders take to the organisation of the curriculum and the different assessment systems used. Leaders have developed different curriculum pathways to meet the needs of all pupils. Well-designed schemes of work ensure that pupils are provided with a broad and balanced curriculum with an emphasis on the development of their personal and social independence skills and learning for life. Pupils have a positive attitude to learning. They report that they enjoy attending school, that teachers help them to do their best and that they are given work that is challenging.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and learning activities are well planned. Teachers and learning support assistants work well together. Learning support assistants work well with individual pupils and small groups. They effectively support pupils with complex needs, enabling them to benefit from learning activities.

The governing body is proud of the school. Governors provide clear and effective leadership and support and challenge the headteacher and other senior leaders. Following the last inspection, the governing body requested an external review of their effectiveness. Governors now carry out regular checks to ensure that they have the right mixture of skills and experience so they can be as effective as possible in checking pupils' progress and the quality of education provided. Individual members of the governing body have developed links with senior leaders to monitor the school's effectiveness. In addition, governors have carried out regular surveys of parent views, they are regular visitors to school and support pupil visits to the local community.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that the arrangements for safeguarding are effective and fit for purpose. There is a strong safeguarding culture throughout the school. The designated safeguarding lead works effectively with the safeguarding governor who regularly checks safeguarding procedures. Leaders work effectively, in partnership with other agencies and services, to help protect children when they are most vulnerable. The single central record of recruitment checks is complete and fully compliant. Governors and leaders have completed safer recruitment training.

The regular training and update sessions, provided by the designated safeguarding lead, have ensured that staff and governors are kept informed of changes in guidance and legislation. Staff are knowledgeable about the risks that pupils face. They are confident about safeguarding procedures and how to report any concerns. Leaders have introduced an online recording system that enables a prompt response to concerns and the analysis of safeguarding information.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school and know that they can talk to an adult if they are worried about anything. Most parents that completed Ofsted's online survey and all those that spoke to an inspector agree that their children are

safe in school. The pupils that completed the online questionnaire report that behaviour is good. They report that teachers deal with any bullying that does happen, quickly and effectively. Pupils learn how to stay safe online in lessons and special assemblies. Leaders share this information with parents in meetings and on the school's website. Pupils say that the school looks after their physical, emotional and mental health and well-being. A pupil described how to stay safe when crossing the road and other pupils described what they had learned in travel training lessons. Inspectors observed pupils working safely in practical subjects.

The arrangements for pupils arriving at, and leaving, school are well organised and supervised by senior staff. Pupils transfer safely between home to school transport and then to the school building and are met by a member of their class team. As a result, pupils start the school day safely and ready to learn.

Inspection findings

- Inspectors started by checking whether the school is a safe place for pupils. Inspectors' observations and assessments of the school's culture, systems and procedures and the feedback from pupils, parents, staff and governors confirmed that safeguarding is effective. Inspectors then checked the actions that leaders have taken to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. In the last inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that:
 - work always matches the needs of the most able pupils accurately and enables them to make the most rapid progress possible
 - marking and feedback consistently give pupils guidance on how to improve their work
 - staff use appropriate levels of signing, in order that all pupils can understand and participate in activities as fully as possible.
- Inspectors saw evidence in pupils' workbooks and through lesson observations that learning activities, for the most able pupils, were well matched to their abilities. As a result, these pupils made good progress. In addition, where marking and feedback was provided, this described how pupils could improve their work and the next steps in their learning. Inspectors observed staff and pupils throughout the day. These observations showed that staff used signing inconsistently. Consequently, the lack of signing prevented some pupils from taking part in lessons and practical activities as effectively as they need to. In addition, inspectors observed that the use of symbols, to help pupils understand text, was also inconsistent. Occasionally, pupils were not able to effectively take part in learning, as resources and worksheets were not always closely matched to their understanding.
- As part of the inspection, we wanted to understand how effective the curriculum and assessment arrangements are in meeting the needs of all pupils and in preparing them for life after school. The principle of learning for life is central to the curriculum and we saw evidence of this throughout the inspection. The curriculum is organised into different pathways to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. Lessons are organised into termly themes and topics. Teachers

and learning support assistants meet regularly to plan and review activities. In key stage 4 and in the school's sixth form, pupils follow a wide range of accredited courses that develop their practical independence skills. As a result, pupils are well prepared to leave school and continue with their education, employment or training.

- Pupils' learning targets are closely linked to the outcomes in their education, health and care plan. Teachers record detailed progress information for each pupil. This helps staff identify the next steps in learning. Individual assessment records are supported by pupil learning journals and photographic evidence folders. Where appropriate, teachers mark pupils' work and provide feedback to help pupils improve their learning. Assessment and progress information is checked regularly by senior leaders and governors. Leaders meet regularly with teachers where pupils are not making expected progress. In addition, leaders now use an electronic system to collect and analyse assessment information at a whole-school level. However, this is at an early stage of development. At the time of the inspection, this did not enable leaders to precisely analyse the progress of different groups of pupils. In addition, although leaders are confident that most pupils are making expected progress and are achieving their targets, they do not systematically compare pupil progress information with other similar schools.
- Inspectors looked at the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan. Leaders have prepared a detailed description of the school's strengths and areas for development. Areas for school improvement are identified through a process of whole-school review with staff and governors. However, there is not a clear link between the range of information that leaders routinely collect and areas for improvement. In addition, development targets are not described sufficiently precisely to enable leaders and governors to measure progress and understand the intended impact on pupil outcomes.
- Leaders described the developing role of recently appointed middle leaders as a priority in the school development plan. Leaders defined the role and responsibilities of these staff across departments and key curriculum areas. They also explain the planning process that identified practical tasks for these staff, such as leading appraisal reviews. The role of middle leaders has not developed sufficiently quickly to enable these staff to have a significant impact upon the quality of teaching and learning, school improvement and pupil outcomes.
- Inspectors also wanted to learn how effectively leaders are using additional funding, such as pupil premium funding, to improve the outcomes for pupils, including those that are disadvantaged. Leaders have used additional funding strategically and effectively to improve the outcomes for all pupils. Additional funding was used to increase the number of classes in the primary department. The impact of this was an improvement in pupil outcomes and a reduction in the incidents of inappropriate behaviour. Leaders have used sports premium funding to develop an extensive programme of sports and residential activities, including the development of a sports leaders programme for older pupils. As a result of the effective use of additional funding, there is no difference in the progress of disadvantaged pupils compared with those with similar needs.

- We also wanted to understand what leaders were doing to improve attendance and reduce the number of pupils that are regularly absent. Most pupils are provided with home to school transport and a small number are brought to and from school by their parent or carer. Leaders have developed a system to record and report pupil absence which includes a first day telephone call made by the school's home-school liaison officer. For the small number of pupils who are persistently absent, the school involves the local authority's education welfare services. As a result, attendance is better than similar schools.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan include measurable targets to assess the impact on pupil outcomes
- they moderate the assessment information collected to check that pupils are making expected or better progress
- they further develop the role and impact of middle leaders so that they contribute effectively to school development and improved pupil outcomes
- staff use appropriate levels of signing and symbol support in order that all pupils can understand and take part in activities as fully as possible
- the school website meets the publication requirements from the Department for 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 East Riding of Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

George Gilmore
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, the deputy headteacher, an assistant headteacher, six governors including the two joint chairs of governors, eight parents and a representative of the local authority's school improvement service.

Inspectors observed pupils arriving at school, at break time and lunchtime. Inspectors visited lessons with leaders, spoke to pupils, looked at their work and spoke to teachers and support staff about assessment and record-keeping. Inspectors looked at pupils' workbooks, curriculum plans, schemes of work and assessment records. An inspector met members of the school council.

Inspectors looked at the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan and discussed these with you and senior leaders, governors and the local authority school improvement partner. Inspectors held discussions with staff responsible for safeguarding, attendance and assessment and progress.

During the inspection, it was not possible to observe sixth-form students who attend the student centre at Driffield School, as these students were off site all day on a pre-arranged visit. An inspector looked at the work of the post-16 students.

Inspectors considered 25 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 16 responses to the free-text service for parents. We also considered 70 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and 19 responses to the online pupil questionnaire.