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Ms Judith Towell
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Towell

Short inspection of Phoenix Arch School

Following my visit to the school on 13 November 2018 with Penny Barratt, 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 March 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Leaders, including governors, have a clear drive to provide the best possible education for pupils. Staff, parents, carers and governors all respect and support the leadership you and your team provide. You have created a positive learning community where each individual is valued and pupils are able to thrive. High-quality teaching and learning are underpinned by strong support to enable pupils to manage their own behaviour and become autonomous learners. Leaders and governors have an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors are well informed about the work of the school and visit regularly. They use this information to offer both support and challenge to leaders.

Since the last inspection, the needs of pupils attending the school have changed. All pupils now have a diagnosis of autism. Leaders have responded well to these changes. Pupils are grouped by age and learning style, meaning that teaching can be tailored to meet the needs of each individual. Teachers plan carefully to make sure that lessons are of a very high quality. Staff support pupils extremely well in their learning. They know when to sit back to enable pupils to work independently and when to offer support.

Pupils say they are very happy at school and this is evident in their enthusiasm and hard work within lessons. Parents are incredibly positive about the school. They are delighted with the progress their children make, both in their academic work and in their personal development and behaviour. Parents speak very highly of the support they receive from the school, particularly around behaviour management. One parent said:

'Phoenix Arch has transformed my child's experience of life, and by extension our family's experience of life. He has grown into a confident child, with excellent learning skills and a deep love of learning.'

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that record-keeping is detailed and of a high quality. You ensure that all pre-employment checks on staff are carried out and recorded.

Staff and governors receive regular safeguarding training on a range of aspects, including online safety and the 'Prevent' duty. Staff know the signs to look out for if they are worried about a pupil and to report these in a timely manner. They understand the need to report any concerns, however small. Where concerns are identified, swift action is taken. Leaders work closely with other agencies and parents to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Parents report that they are confident that their children are safe at school.

Inspection findings

- First, we agreed to look at how well staff promote positive behaviour and teach pupils to manage their own behaviour. There is a clear ethos for managing behaviour which is shared by all staff. This means that practice is very consistent across the school and pupils know what is expected of them. There is a real focus on developing pupils' ability to manage their own behaviour and emotions, and staff use a range of highly effective strategies to support pupils. As a result, pupils learn to behave exceptionally well, both within their lessons and at other times of the day such as playtimes or when moving between lessons.
- Pupils are taught to analyse their own behaviour, and staff support them to reflect and make better choices in the future. Pupils know they can access the 'Calming Zone' whenever they need to. Reward systems are clearly displayed in every classroom and fully understood by the pupils. Where necessary, these are adapted to support individual pupils who are unable to access the whole school system. Classrooms are calm and purposeful. Instances of challenging behaviour are dealt with rapidly and sensitively by staff, so little learning time is lost.
- Leaders and teachers work closely with parents to share strategies which are effective in managing pupils' behaviour at the school. Parents really value the support they receive and the positive impact it has had on their children's behaviour at home.

- We then looked at how well pupils make progress from their starting points. All pupils achieve and some exceed their challenging targets in English, mathematics and science. Pupils move on to more challenging targets as soon as they are ready. Leaders methodically track the progress each pupil is making and use this information to identify any pupil not making the progress they are capable of. Regular meetings with teachers mean that interventions are rapidly put in place to make sure pupils continue to progress.
- Pupils make excellent progress from their starting points in English and mathematics. Observations of learning in lessons, work in pupils' books and the school's assessment information confirm this. A small number of pupils achieve age-related expectations at the end of key stage two. Progress in science, although typically strong, is not as strong as in other subjects. Leaders have identified a need to refine assessment processes in science to secure the same substantial progress as that which is achieved in English and mathematics.
- Teachers record the small steps of progress which pupils make in English and mathematics meticulously. They use this information very effectively to plan activities systematically which are highly tailored to each individual's needs.
- Finally, we agreed to look at how well the school prepares pupils for the next stage of their education and life. Leaders have recently reviewed and developed aspects of the curriculum. The aim was to place a greater emphasis on pupils' independent learning skills and collaboration. Evidence suggests that this has already had a positive impact, even though it is still at an early stage. During visits to lessons, inspectors observed Years 5 and 6 pupils enthusiastically learning about the First World War. Pupils selected their own areas of the topic to research and were able to discuss their learning with inspectors. Work produced was of a high quality.
- Leaders are committed to developing pupils' literacy skills as a priority for the next steps in their education. Teachers take every opportunity to develop pupils' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills across the curriculum. In the early years class, inspectors observed pupils developing their vocabulary and learning to read symbol-supported text. Older pupils are able to read and write to a very high standard, taking into account their additional needs. Pupils read fluently to inspectors and were able to discuss and take meaning from what they had read.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they refine the system of assessment in science so that pupils make the same very strong progress in this subject as they do in English and mathematics.

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

published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Charlotte Millward
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with leaders, governors, staff, parents and pupils. We observed learning alongside senior leaders in all classes within the school. We met with the designated lead for safeguarding and scrutinised a range of related documentation, including individual pupil records and the single central record. Inspectors looked at a range of other documentation including pupils' work, assessment and progress information, and behaviour incident logs. Inspectors met with the senior leaders responsible for behaviour management and assessment. We considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents Parent View. There were no responses to the staff or pupil questionnaire.