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Mr Daran Bland
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Dear Mr Bland

Short inspection of The John Fielding Special School

Following my visit to the school on 31 January 2019 with Heather Hawkes, 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

The new leaders have transformed the school during the past year. They have focused their efforts to support the staff to deliver a curriculum to meet the pupils' needs. Pupils enjoy school and the relationships between the staff and pupils are very strong. Staff are very attentive to the pupils' needs and treat them with respect. Parents and carers appreciate the improvements that the leaders have made over the past year. The school is a harmonious environment where pupils make good progress and are well prepared for life after school.

Pupils are warmly welcomed into school by staff. Some pupils are encouraged to walk independently to their classrooms. Younger pupils are engaged in their learning very well. Staff use a range of strategies, for example playing games, using torches or switches and singing to inform pupils who are non-verbal when an activity commences. They use resources which enable pupils to use all their senses to reinforce concepts, for example the values of numbers. Staff are very patient while waiting for the pupils' responses. Pupils are able to make choices and respond to the activities to make good progress.

Older pupils are encouraged to be involved in their local community. All pupils in the post-14 class are supported by a member of staff to be part of a local drama group, which meets every Tuesday. They have performed two concerts to the public,

singing and dancing. The pupils greatly enjoy these activities which boost their self-esteem. Older pupils also study a day a week at Boston College, where they have learned about festivals around the world. The most recent school leavers all secured a place at the college to further their learning.

Leaders have worked creatively to improve the quality of teaching at the school. They have established apprenticeships to support teaching assistants to gain a deeper knowledge of the needs of the pupils. They have also supported the development of a special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) foundation degree at Boston College, to enable teaching assistants to progress to become qualified teachers. Currently, five members of staff are enrolled on these courses. The Community Inclusive Trust and the head of school have both won awards from Boston College for their work in this area.

At the inspection of the predecessor school, leaders were asked to develop the role of teachers, so they could fully support senior leaders. In addition, leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching by teachers and teaching assistants working together and sharing good practice. Teachers are working effectively to support the development of the apprentice teaching assistants and higher-level teaching assistants to improve the quality of teaching. They share the planning of activities and demonstrate good teaching practice to the support staff. Time is provided for staff to reflect on their practice and develop new strategies to meet the needs of the pupils. This is enabling all members of staff to contribute to the pupils' progress. Finally, the trust provides good support for staff by organising training and supporting teachers to visit other schools in the trust to develop their practice further. The staff appreciate the support they receive for their professional development, and morale is high.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders are very proactive in keeping pupils safe and all safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. They respond promptly to any concerns raised and liaise very well with a range of agencies to support pupils and their families. Leaders are not afraid to escalate their concerns when they believe that outside agencies have not supported the pupils as well as they should. This has resulted in extra support for the pupils and their families, which has been beneficial.

The training of staff is up to date and of good quality. Staff are very knowledgeable about safeguarding and recognise changes of behaviour in pupils which require further monitoring to check that pupils are safe. Leaders are proactive at referring any incidents which affect pupils within the local community to external agencies to keep the pupils safe. Pupils are aware of the dangers of illegal drug use and know how to stay safe online.

The number of physical restraints is low. When pupils have been restrained, the reasons were analysed in depth and detailed support plans put in place to reduce the number of incidents. The school works very closely with parents. As a result, the incidents of physical restraint reduce quickly and remain low overall. There have

been no fixed-term or permanent exclusions at the school since the inspection of the predecessor school.

Inspection findings

- The quality of teaching is improving because the communication between pupils and staff has strengthened. This is enabling pupils to respond to learning activities and staff to understand their responses. Staff have developed a range of strategies to communicate with pupils successfully, particularly those pupils who are non-verbal. For example, staff registering the younger pupils sing the children's names and provide photographs of the children attached to toy flamingos. Children then use a press switch when they recognise their photograph. This also reinforces that they are in the flamingo class. Staff across the school also use symbols, Makaton and pictures, and closely observe pupils' eye movements when pupils are prompted to make a choice. The most able pupils are challenged by having to make a choice from a larger range of materials.
- Lessons are structured well, and pupils are familiar with classroom routines. There are activities which are repeated through the week to consolidate learning. Pupils are provided with opportunities to learn new concepts, ably supported by the staff. Lessons are focused, and time is used efficiently to maximise learning.
- Pupils who have English as an additional language make good progress because they learn to communicate well with staff. In addition, the school has organised English classes for parents who do not speak English as their first language. This has improved communication between the school and home, and helped this group of pupils to settle quickly into school.
- Teachers regularly assess pupils' work in line with the school's policy. However, not all the assessments are consistently dated or evaluative to judge how well pupils have achieved the learning objectives. It therefore makes it difficult to accurately evaluate the pupils' progress.
- The teaching of phonics is strong in the early years and pupils are enthusiastic about reading. Pupils develop a good knowledge of the sounds that letters make. However, older pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their fluency in reading. In addition, reading books are not sufficiently well matched to the pupils' abilities, which limits their progress.
- The way in which the curriculum is taught has been changed to meet the needs of the pupils. The most able are challenged to work independently. After weighing objects on a set of balance scales, pupils used picture cues with labels to identify the correct mathematical vocabulary to show which objects weighed the heaviest or lightest. The post-14 curriculum has been recently redesigned to enable the most able to achieve at a higher level in their life and living course. It is too soon to judge the impact of this change.
- Pupils' attendance is just below the national average for similar schools. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is higher than the national average. The home-family liaison officer rings home on the first day of a pupil's absence to find out the reason. However, if the pupil is absent for longer

than one day, the procedure in school to check on the welfare of the pupils is unclear. Consequently, staff are not consistently offering parents the extra support which may help the pupil to return to school more quickly.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- assessments of pupils' achievements consistently help pupils to make steady gains in their learning
- older pupils' reading skills are further developed so they become fluent readers
- there are clear procedures in place to monitor and improve pupils' attendance, particularly for those pupils who are persistently absent.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Martin Finch
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we met with you, the head of school, the assistant headteacher, the senior teacher, teachers, teaching assistants, the home-school liaison officer and the school administrator. We observed learning through the school. We reviewed pupils' work and the assessment of pupils' work. We met with the acting chair of the governing body, one other member of the governing body, the chair of the trustees' board and the chief executive officer of the trust. We listened to pupils read and spoke with a group of pupils. We reviewed records about keeping children safe. We studied the school development plan and the school's self-evaluation. We reviewed the six parental responses to the Ofsted free-text service and spoke informally with parents at the start of the school day. There were too few responses to Parent View, the online parents' questionnaire, for the results to be published. We reviewed the 32 responses to the staff survey.