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Mrs Angie Fisher
Principal
David Lewis School
Mill Lane
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Dear Mrs Fisher

Short inspection of David Lewis School

Following my visit to the school on 29 January 2019 with Her Majesty's Inspector Mark Quinn, 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 December 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

You continue to meet the individual needs of pupils effectively. Aply supported by your head of school and team of specialist professionals, you have worked hard to develop high-quality personalised learning for each pupil. Parents and carers are delighted with the standard of education and care that their children receive at the school.

Since the previous inspection, a new chair of governors has been appointed and members of the governing body are regular visitors to the school. Governors take part in a range of activities and are knowledgeable about your self-evaluation. They make good use of their diverse skills, expertise and experience to provide effective challenge and support to you and your leaders.

The number of pupils in the school continues to be low but your ambitious vision to provide an exciting, broad and personalised curriculum is shared and understood by governors, staff and parents. You have been active in widely promoting your school and the provision you can offer for pupils with complex needs beyond the local area. We saw the positive increase in pupil numbers as a result of your efforts.

You have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for

improvement. You have used this information to develop the curriculum for pupils with complex autism spectrum disorder. We saw that pupils' engagement in a range of activities has increased as a result. You are supported well by an effective head of school. She, too, is aspirational for all pupils and has the trust and support of her colleagues. Staff are complimentary about senior leaders and value the introduction of new initiatives to promote a positive work-life balance. They talk positively about the respect and support they are given. Their contributions are valued and there is a strong sense of team spirit.

Pupils have a range of complex needs and some have additional medical, sensory or physical needs. Committed staff support pupils well. Attendance is very good because pupils enjoy school and are happy. Parents recognise the effective work that you and your team do and appreciate the difference you are making to their children's lives.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. You now ensure that teachers refer to pupils' precise targets when evaluating and recording learning that has taken place during lessons. You and your teachers have revised the pro forma used to plan and evaluate learning in lessons. Intended learning outcomes are more precise and support staff are able to make focused observations and comment on progress towards goals. These observations enable teachers to plan effectively the next steps for individual pupils in all areas of their learning and development.

You have introduced a new electronic system which enables teachers to store assessment information and analyse it to identify gaps in learning more precisely. Staff are becoming more confident in its use and can measure and evaluate more accurately the progress that pupils are making. As a result, teachers' planning of learning activities is better matched to individual pupils' abilities.

You have further developed the school website so that all stakeholders can access information about the school. The website has up-to-date information about the school and the provision that you make for pupils with complex needs. More detailed information is available upon request.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders ensure that they recruit the most suitable people to work with their very vulnerable pupils by carrying out comprehensive checks. They provide new staff with a thorough and extensive induction programme.

You and your staff build positive relationships with pupils so that you quickly gain their confidence and trust. You manage pupils' anxieties well, listening carefully to pupils' concerns. You identify events and activities that may cause worry and put strategies in place to overcome these. All adults have received training in managing situations where pupils' behaviour is challenging. They typically use de-escalation

strategies. Adults also know how to use safe physical intervention strategies but only when absolutely necessary. Behaviour plans are thorough and reviewed regularly. The people who support the school do so well. Some provide professional support in managing behaviour. They provide regular advice to staff and update strategies to support individual pupils so that the risk of challenging behaviour is reduced.

Staff are aware of their responsibilities in protecting pupils from harm. They are skilled at communicating with pupils who find it challenging to express themselves clearly. Leaders are vigilant in following up any concerns they have about a pupil with the team of social workers based on campus. Social workers and the leadership team work closely together to agree on the most appropriate actions, which are taken without delay.

Inspection findings

- A key line of enquiry was to explore how well the curriculum meets the individual needs of all pupils and enables them to achieve outcomes agreed in their education, health and care (EHC) plans. It is evident that leaders have a clear rationale for the curriculum. There is a clear focus on developing communication skills, social skills, independence and engagement in learning. As a result, pupils are making progress in all aspects of their development.
- Timetabling is flexible to enable staff to respond to the changing needs of pupils throughout the school day. Pupils who have sensory processing difficulties benefit from regular breaks to take part in a range of physical activities. These enable them to become calmer or more alert so that they can then return to the classroom to re-engage in learning.
- Staff work hard to get to know what interests and motivates pupils. Often, teachers use pupils' interests to plan learning activities which motivate and inspire pupils to learn. For example, when new pupils start school, staff plan transition activities linked to their personal interests, such as a horticulture programme to reflect an interest in gardening.
- Specialist professionals who work in the school meet termly to discuss individual pupils and the progress they are making. They provide training for staff to ensure that support plans and strategies are delivered effectively. Support plans are reviewed regularly to ensure that the agreed sensory activities and behaviour management strategies continue to have the desired effect.
- Following detailed baseline assessments when pupils join the school, ongoing checks on pupils' learning inform teaching activities effectively and ensure that teaching is generally well matched to pupils' abilities. Staff provide effective support for pupils during lessons. They have high expectations of the pupils and most expect them to be as independent as possible. For example, pupils with complex autism spectrum disorder worked with much independence to make a quiche Lorraine by following a sequence of visual cues. They were encouraged to follow a visual schedule to wash dishes, put the clean dishes away and clean the tables they had used. These tasks were completed successfully with appropriate

verbal prompts from support assistants.

- Leaders have developed a thematic curriculum which enables pupils to develop skills across a range of subject areas. Pupils who are able to follow a more formalised curriculum make good progress from their starting points. Teachers use questioning effectively to encourage pupils to think more deeply. They set challenges, such as how to cut more than one circle from paper at a time during an art session. Work in pupils' books shows that some are working significantly beyond the outcomes detailed in their EHC plan.
- The other line of enquiry related to preparation for adulthood. All pupils have a weekly work experience afternoon in the college juice bar or the campus shop. Some pupils are developing skills for the catering industry, such as food preparation, cooking and clearing tables. Others develop skills for the retail industry, including stocking shelves, serving customers and handling money. Pupils are mostly developing a range of skills and making good progress. However, for some pupils with more complex needs, planned activities do not meet their needs well. Too few practical activities are planned during these sessions to enable pupils to meet their goals. Opportunities to develop social communication and independent living skills for pupils with the most complex needs are underdeveloped.
- Pupils benefit from extra-curricular activities where they can develop housekeeping and independent living skills, such as doing laundry, cooking a meal and cleaning. They also benefit from visits into the local community to access community facilities such as shops, the trampoline park, the swimming pool at the leisure centre and other sports facilities where they have new opportunities to develop communication and social skills.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they more closely match planned work experience to the individual interests and needs of pupils
- teachers make the best use of learning time by adapting and reshaping activities as required to reflect the needs of each pupil.

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

Yours sincerely

Michelle Beard
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

We carried out visits to classrooms, the cookery room, the shop and the juice bar. Some of these were joint activities with you and the head of school. We scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary, action plans for school improvement, records of incidents of pupils' challenging behaviour, minutes of meetings of the governing body and records connected with the safeguarding of pupils. We held discussions with specialist professionals, members of staff and pupils. We held discussions on the telephone with the chair of governors and a parent. We analysed the school's own assessment information and sampled pupils' work. We analysed one response received through Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, six responses to the staff survey and one response to the pupil survey.