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Dear Miss de Bunsen and Ms Baker

Short inspection of Kennel Lane School

Following my visit to the school on 25 April 2019 with Hilary Goddard, 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 November 2015.

This school continues to be good.

Leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Pupils at Kennel Lane School are safe, happy and progressing well, both in their learning and in their personal development. A golden thread that runs through the school's work is a shared determination to ensure that pupils are well prepared for life, study and work when they eventually leave school.

Pupils speak with genuine enthusiasm about their school and about the help they get from the adults that teach and care for them. They enjoy their learning. However, some pupils said that their work can sometimes be too easy. Pupils benefit from many opportunities to develop their wider interests and knowledge about the world around them, for example through their regular community visits or from work experience.

Many parents and carers speak in glowing terms about the substantial improvements they have seen in their children's learning, attitudes and behaviour. One parent who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, wrote: 'My child is very happy at Kennel Lane and it caters to his needs perfectly. All staff are friendly and helpful and the progress my son has made and continues to make is fantastic.' However, some parents felt that their children could be pushed harder at school or expressed concern at the increased turnover in staff that the school has seen over the last year or so.

Over two thirds of staff who responded to Ofsted's online survey feel that the school has improved since the previous inspection, particularly in the development of the curriculum. Most staff believe that leaders take account of their workload when making decisions, but some voiced concern at the increased volume of work this year as new curriculum arrangements come in.

Leaders and governors have worked tirelessly since the previous inspection to address the areas that the lead inspector highlighted in her report. Staff agree that the training they have had has boosted their confidence in supporting pupils' communication development and has helped to make their classroom practice more consistent. Since the appointment of the new headteacher, leaders have rightly prioritised the development of the curriculum, which has continued to be considerably strengthened, including in science. Finally, you have invested in well-received training for your middle and senior leaders to give them the skills that they need to drive school improvement at this important time in the school's development.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils' welfare and well-being lie at the heart of all that the school does. Pupils know that there is always someone they can talk to if they are worried about anything. Staff and governors undertake regular safeguarding training. As a result, all those who work or volunteer in the school are well informed about the main risks to pupils' safety and know what to do if they have any safeguarding concerns. Rigorous risk assessments are in place to ensure that pupils who take part in trips and visits in the community or to other educational establishments are kept safe. Governors check that leaders implement agreed safeguarding policies fully.

Leaders take prompt action when it is necessary to involve outside services to protect a child. Leaders are tenacious in ensuring that all referrals are followed up, and that timely and effective support is put in place.

Leaders make sure that pupils understand how to use the internet safely; for example, pupils were able to talk about what they had learned on a recent e-safety day. Leaders also place information about child protection, including online safety, on the school's website so that parents also understand the risks that their children may face. Careful checks are made on the suitability of all staff and volunteers to work with children. Leaders took steps to correct a minor administrative error in the school's single central record that was pointed out during the inspection.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to look closely at selected areas of the school's work. As well as the effectiveness of safeguarding, we explored: how well teachers and leaders use the curriculum to help pupils to develop resilience and independence in their learning; how leaders ensure that pupils behave well, attend regularly and are well prepared for their next steps; and the effectiveness of governors' strategic oversight.

- As noted above, leaders have rightly placed the curriculum at the centre of your school improvement work. Under the banner of the 'TALENTS' curriculum, leaders have raised staff awareness of the need for planning and teaching to take greater account of each pupil's individual needs. For example, in the early years and key stage 1 classes, teachers and other adults make accurate judgements about pupils' next steps. Similarly, in mathematics in key stage 3, teachers have become more skilled at using assessment information to plan appropriate activities that help to develop pupils' fluency, reasoning and problem-solving skills. Teachers and other adults make skilful use of communication aids to support all pupils in demonstrating their knowledge.
- Pupils and students in key stage 4 and the sixth form are helped to build their skills and understanding in a range of subjects as a result of a carefully designed options programme. For example, pupils and students in a mixed-age performing arts group were seen demonstrating an impressive understanding of the role of masks and gesture in Greek theatre.
- Where possible, you make use of the strong partnerships you have developed to further broaden the curriculum. For example, some key stage 2 pupils attend an inclusion class at a local primary school, while some older pupils and students access appropriate courses at a nearby secondary school and further education colleges.
- The revised curriculum has only recently been introduced, and some elements are not yet fully in place. For example, opportunities for pupils to develop their independent writing skills are not systematic enough. In addition, although activities are increasingly well matched to pupils' needs, there is some variability in the levels of challenge given to the most able pupils, particularly in key stage 2.
- Leaders have put in place exceptionally strong arrangements to ensure that pupils are well prepared for life after school. Staff responsible for careers education are passionate in their determination that pupils develop their resilience and independence through a broad and varied curriculum.
- Careers coaches meet with pupils regularly to help them to reflect on their learning, identifying where they have displayed skills such as teamwork and leadership. In addition, weekly community visits help pupils from key stage 1 onwards to develop important life skills such as shopping and using public transport independently.
- Once pupils reach key stage 4, they are given comprehensive information about the options available to them once they leave school. You have placed a particular emphasis on work experience and internships to ensure that pupils and sixth-form students are able to make informed choices about their next steps.
- Most pupils conduct themselves well in class and around the school. They try their hardest in class, and are polite, both to adults and to each other. Staff provide strong support for pupils with challenging behaviour, following agreed procedures closely. Sensibly, you have put in place additional staff training this year to help meet the needs of the growing number of pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs.

- Governors are committed to the school and take their responsibilities, including those for safeguarding, seriously. They evaluate their own effectiveness, making sure that they have the range of skills and experience necessary to provide strong oversight of all aspects of the school's performance.
- Governors hold leaders stringently to account for their actions and provide consistently strong levels of challenge to ensure that all is being done to meet each child's needs. They scrutinise finances closely and have a good understanding of how additional government funding, including the pupil premium grant, is spent. They have recently begun to ask more probing questions about the impact of this funding on the progress of disadvantaged pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers make sharper use of assessment information to ensure that work set meets all pupils' needs and provides consistently high levels of challenge to the most able
- more opportunities are provided across the curriculum and age groups to help pupils develop their independent writing skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Gary Holden
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors carried out visits to all classes, accompanied by members of the leadership team. Inspectors also held meetings with senior and middle leaders to evaluate the impact of their work. I met with the chair of governors and four other members of the governing body. The team inspector spoke to the local authority improvement adviser. Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation that you made available to us, including your self-evaluation and school improvement plan. Inspectors also reviewed the school's policies and procedures for safeguarding. Meetings were held with two groups of pupils and, informally, with parents at the start of the day. Inspectors took account of 20 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 25 written comments. Inspectors also considered 56 responses to the staff survey.