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Mr Billy McInally
Headteacher
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Dear Mr McInally

Short inspection of Hamilton Lodge School and College for Deaf Children

Following my visit to the school on 9 July 2019 with Ofsted Inspector John Bosley, 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 2016.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since starting at the school in September 2018, you have led with passion and commitment to improve outcomes for the pupils at the school. You are ambitious for your pupils and determined to provide the educational experience that they need in order to succeed. You have an accurate view of your school and have identified appropriate key areas for improvement. As a result, you have gained the support of your staff and governors to develop new initiatives within a rich curriculum. They have wholeheartedly bought into your vision for the school.

In lessons, pupils behave with respect and show consideration for each other and the adults who support them. They enjoy coming to school, working hard to develop their communication skills, in particular through using British sign language. As a result, pupils are able to benefit from a curriculum that meets their individual needs, and achieve success.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about your leadership and the changes you have brought about. They appreciate that you listen to their views and consider their well-being in the decisions you make. As a result, staff feel valued and respected. Teachers are proud of the progress that pupils make and that pupils are well prepared for the 'real world'. Teachers recognise the impact of the individualised curriculum on pupils' achievement, as well as the wider curriculum opportunities

that enable pupils to use and practise their skills, both in the community and on educational visits.

Governors are dedicated and skilled. They are committed to improving pupils' outcomes, and possess a strong understanding of the unique needs of pupils at the school. Governors have a clear vision for improving outcomes for the pupils and preparing them for taking up a place in society. They are aware of the need to challenge the actions of leaders, as well as developing policy to ensure that pupils are safe. They have a range of expertise which enables them to monitor all aspects of the school's provision through targeted purposeful visits and meetings with staff.

Parents and carers are extremely positive about the impact the school has had on 'transforming' their children's lives. They recognise the expertise of staff at the school and the progress their children have made in developing their communication skills, as well as their overall academic achievements. They are also confident that their children are safe and nurtured by the skilled and caring staff. Consequently, pupils are happy to come to school and they develop a love of learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that pupils' safety has the highest priority. Appropriate training for staff ensures that they know how to keep pupils safe. The integrated services in the school enable early interventions to be identified to support the individual needs of pupils and help to keep them safe. Leaders are acutely aware of the importance of online safety for the pupils in the school and there is specific teaching to ensure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe.

Record-keeping systems have recently been renewed by leaders and provide immediate access to individual cases. This allows leaders to have a clear and constant awareness of the chronology of any concerns. Pupils' attendance at the school is rigorously monitored and, where a few pupils have not been attending regularly, leaders have taken action to ensure that their attendance improves. This is a caring and nurturing school where staff know pupils very well and, as a result, pupils feel safe.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and staff use accurate assessment to identify pupils' needs and ensure that they make appropriate adaptations to the curriculum. Pupils make strong progress because teachers set work which matches the needs of their pupils. However, a lack of challenge for some of the most able pupils can limit their progress.
- Pupils are motivated and engaged in developing a range of skills, knowledge and understanding, including using sign language. The curriculum provides a range of exciting learning opportunities through practical activities, educational visits and working with partners in further education. Joint planning with therapists in school ensures that pupils are able to make progress in developing a range of

skills with their language and physical development. The curriculum seeks to raise the aspiration of pupils in the school. For example, pupils look at deaf culture and its history, learning about the achievements of people who have the same disability.

- Subject leaders are skilled and ambitious and have set out a curriculum that meets the needs of pupils. Pupils develop their reading and writing skills across a range of subjects, preparing them well for the next stage of their education. For example, in the primary class, pupils were supported successfully to use their knowledge of phonics to write words in a science lesson, reinforcing both their science vocabulary and their spelling.
- Leaders contribute their ideas and work hard to develop and further improve the school. Leaders and staff work together well as a team to make sure that all pupils can reach their potential. The nurturing and caring ethos of the school supports pupils and encourages them to do their best.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils, especially the most able, are routinely challenged to achieve at the highest standards.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Johns
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

My colleague and I met with you and other leaders. We visited lessons and observed playtime with the head of school and senior leaders. We spoke to some pupils in class and looked through their work. We held meetings with key staff about the progress of pupils, the curriculum and safeguarding. We also met with a group of staff to hear their views about the school. I met with the chair of governors and spoke with the school improvement partner. We considered the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for parents, Parent View, including free-text comments. I also spoke to parents by telephone to hear their views. We scrutinised a range of the school's documentation and a selection of pupils' work.