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Ms Sally Joy
Headteacher
Delius Special School
Barkerend Road
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Dear Ms Joy

Short inspection of Delius Special School

Following my visit to the school on 1 March 2017 with Fiona Dixon, 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection by carrying out a relentless programme of improvement.

From the very start of the inspection the whole leadership team demonstrated their passion for improving outcomes for every child who attends the school. Your very clear vision for the future of the school is shared by staff and the governing body as well as the leadership team. This demonstrates well the strength of your leadership.

Your very high expectations of everyone are clearly modelled on your own drive and determination. Staff comments such as: 'This school is just brilliant', and 'We all work hard, but love working here' reflect the views of staff overall. Observations like 'We feel listened to' and 'Our contributions count' demonstrate the strength of your commitment to the well-being of staff in the school.

Your encyclopaedic knowledge of the needs of all pupils is admirable. The very clear focus on 'getting it right for all pupils' is directly reflected in the improvements in the quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils that you have brought about since the previous inspection. Making school even better is a continuous theme threaded through all that you and your team do.

Since the previous inspection you have increased the role middle leaders play within the school. Your imaginative approach of getting middle leaders to undertake

specific pieces of work linked to school improvement, such as improving communication at lunchtime, as well as monitoring pupils' progress in their subject areas, has contributed well to whole-school improvement.

You have put in place an effective model for appraising the work of staff. Your high expectations of all staff are evident in targets set which link closely to school improvement. Rewards are based on staff performance. This is contributing well to bringing about further improvement.

The large number of parents who arrived to speak to the inspection team was clear evidence of your strong relationship with the local community. Their very real appreciation of all that you and your staff do for their children was evident in the feedback they gave the inspection team. Comments such as: 'I trust the staff with my child and know he will be safe in school'; 'Nothing is too much trouble for staff'; and 'We receive constant communication from staff; I know exactly what my child is doing when he is at school' reflected the views of many parents. Parents and the local community are welcomed into school regularly and many attend the myriad different events such as beauty therapy and massage classes organised by school.

Representatives from different organisations such as housing benefit and physiotherapy offer services to parents on the days when parents join their children in school. This has dramatically increased attendance at these days from 33% to more than 66% of parents and carers. Developing consultant paediatric clinics in school has also increased attendance at appointments and is greatly appreciated by parents and carers.

The system that senior leaders have recently put in place to measure pupils' progress against their targets is beginning to show in the good and better progress made by pupils across the school. However, current data shows that the targets set for the most able pupils are not as challenging as they could be.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff in all areas of the school are very clear that safeguarding pupils is everyone's responsibility. Keeping children safe is central to all actions undertaken by the school. You are tenacious in your approach to following up the whereabouts of pupils who leave school at times other than at the end of a phase. Your relentless approach to this task was described by leaders as 'like a dog with a bone'. Your high success rate with this is a tribute to your diligence.

Safeguarding training is regularly provided for all staff including cleaning and carpark staff, some of whom are employed by other organisations. This ensures that all staff are kept updated on current themes and issues.

The chair of the governing body is the governor responsible for safeguarding. Her very regular visits to school and the active part she takes in monitoring behavioural incidents across the school demonstrate her commitment to this role.

Safeguarding systems are securely in place and a single central record of safeguarding checks carried out on all staff is kept and regularly updated. You, several members of staff and four members of the governing body have completed further training on recruiting staff safely and files of recently recruited staff reflect this well.

Inspection findings

- One of the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report asked the school to provide more opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their mathematical skills, particularly in developing their ability to measure and recognise shapes. This became a key line of enquiry for the inspection. Analysis of staff planning and work seen in the classroom and in the most able pupils' books confirmed that you have thoroughly addressed this area for improvement across the school.
- I also noted that a further area for improvement from the previous inspection report asked the school to ensure that all adults use signs and symbols consistently to aid communication with pupils. Inspectors visited nearly every classroom in school with senior leaders. While inspectors saw most staff signing confidently, some were less confident and signed less often. This reduced some pupils' access to learning. Discussions with you and the senior leadership team reassured us that further training was planned to support those less confident members of staff.
- The school shares its site with two other primary schools. At the time of the previous inspection it was noted that there were too few links between the schools. A discussion with senior leaders from both schools during the inspection demonstrated clearly that pupils from your school spent time in both primary schools and that this was a reciprocal arrangement, with pupils from the other schools spending time at Delius school. Both senior leaders felt this benefited all pupils. Further plans are in place to develop more collaborative work between staff at the three schools.
- You and your staff recognise that levels of attendance for pupils in school were lower than those for other similar schools in 2015. Raising levels of attendance has become a clear focus for the school which you have tackled diligently. As a result of a raft of different initiatives, including identifying the reasons for individual pupils' absence, attendance has started to rise to figures closer to those of other similar schools. You and your senior leadership team are clear that there is more work to be done and plan to continue to address this aspect with rigour.
- The issue of moving pupils around the site is one that you and the leadership team have addressed by putting in place 'transition plans' for each class. During the inspection it became apparent that a small number of staff were not always using these plans to move pupils around school. As a result, some transfers of pupils from room to room were not completed as smoothly as they should have been.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- targets set for the most able pupils are sufficiently challenging and enable them to make the progress of which they are capable
- staff adhere more closely to the written plans in place which give clear direction for moving pupils around school.

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

Yours sincerely

Marian Thomas
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection the inspection team held meetings with you, senior leaders, the school staff and the chair of the governing body. We also met informally with 14 parents and carers at the beginning of the school day. We spoke with pupils both inside and outside classrooms. The inspection team scrutinised a range of documents including work in pupils' books, safeguarding documents, behaviour and attendance files and the school's system for measuring pupils' progress. The inspection team also took into account the views of 26 parents who contacted the inspection team through the online questionnaire Parent View.