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20 July 2018

Mrs Karen Lewis  
Headteacher  
Fairfields School  
Trinity Avenue  
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Dear Mrs Lewis

### **Short inspection of Fairfields School**

Following my visit to the school on 26 June 2018 with Mark Emly, 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 outstanding following a Section 5 Inspection in March 2014.

### **This school continues to be outstanding.**

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have worked successfully to ensure that the quality of leadership of the governing body, senior leaders and middle leaders is strong. All staff we spoke with feel valued, and you have worked very successfully to ensure that staff receive the training they need to improve their practice and maximise pupils' outcomes. The determination of leaders to provide pupils with the best possible education is very evident across the school.

The upbeat atmosphere is consistently evident throughout the school day. Warm relationships between staff and pupils ensure that pupils feel safe at school and make excellent progress. Almost all parents and carers are extremely positive about the school.

You have worked diligently and with success to develop a curriculum based on the needs of pupils and which links closely to the objectives in pupils' education, health and care plans. The question, 'How will this help our pupils?' is at the centre of everything the school does.

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to ensure that pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties are challenged consistently in all lessons. Leaders have ensured that staff have access to high-quality training, allowing them to provide learning which is tailored to the individual needs of the pupils. There is

strong and effective support within the classroom. This is based on a 'wait, watch and wonder' philosophy, which gives pupils the time needed to make small but important steps of progress.

You have developed an assessment system to measure more accurately the progress pupils are making. This system is not yet fully developed to enable parents to be clearly informed about how well their child is doing.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a strong safeguarding ethos across the whole school, which is shared by all members of the staff team. Governors take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously and actively challenge the school with regard to record-keeping and safer recruitment practices. Safeguarding records and procedures are very effective.

Staff are vigilant and have received up-to-date safeguarding training, including about child protection and female genital mutilation. Safeguarding training is at the centre of induction programmes for those staff recently appointed. All staff are fully aware of the actions required should they have a concern about a pupil's well-being. An effective system for reporting concerns ensures that any concern raised by members of the school community is dealt with quickly and effectively. You ensure that staff receive regular updates regarding any safeguarding concerns.

You and the safeguarding team work closely with parents and local agencies when you have a concern about a pupil's welfare. The dedicated safeguarding team has a proven track record of escalating concerns to ensure the safety of pupils and their families.

Pupils feel extremely safe in school. When asked what they like about school, one pupil said, 'Making friends and knowing that I am safe wherever I am.' Another comment was, 'Some pupils have their moments, but adults are there to keep us safe.'

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

### **Inspection findings**

- Leaders know the school well as a result of thorough self-evaluation. Governors monitor the work of the school closely, are actively involved in supporting development across the school and provide challenge as required. There is a clear strategic vision of where the school is going, and this is shared by all staff. Leaders work determinedly and successfully to improve outcomes for all pupils in the school.
- Leadership throughout the school is well established. Leaders are empowered not only to develop their own areas of responsibility but to take on an increasing role in whole-school development. This collaborative approach has brought about

recent changes to the curriculum, for example. Very strong leadership capacity has been developed across the whole school.

- The curriculum has been successfully tailored to meet pupils' needs. The school very aptly helps pupils to make excellent progress, both in terms of their academic potential and with regard to their individual outcomes recorded in their education, health and care plans.
- Classroom areas have been developed to ensure that pupils receive the support they require to fully access their learning. The well-planned curriculum enables pupils to develop their ability to keep themselves safe.
- Teachers know pupils very well and use this knowledge to provide appropriate learning for them. For example, teachers skilfully adapt learning for pupils' different needs. This inclusive practice is common throughout the school. Learning assistants support the pupils' learning extremely well, including encouraging pupils to work independently where possible. Pupils make excellent progress.
- The school ensures that pupils have access to highly appropriate additional support, including physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech and language therapy. Leaders have provided very effective training to enable staff to help pupils maximise their movement and gain independence.
- In the early years, staff plan children's learning very effectively, which contributes significantly to their excellent progress. Staff adapt their approach to meet the individual needs of the children, using assessment information to inform children's next steps.
- The pupil premium funding is used very effectively. There is no difference between the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and that of non-disadvantaged pupils. Both groups of pupils make excellent progress. Leaders ensure that pupils have access to highly enriching activities, including during the after-school club and the weekend club.
- As a teaching school, the school shares practice with a wide range of schools. For example, the school has developed a network of lead coordinators for the provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities to help mainstream schools support their pupils who have additional needs. School leaders develop their skills in providing professional development courses for teachers and new entrants to the teaching profession.
- Attendance is higher than the national average for special schools. When pupils are absent, effective monitoring procedures ensure that they return to school as quickly as possible.
- Behaviour is excellent. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school site. They have positive attitudes to learning, engage well in activities and are happy to talk about their school. There have been no exclusions for the past three years.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- parents receive useful and clear information about how well their child is progressing.

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

Yours sincerely

Christopher Greenhough  
Ofsted Inspector

### **Information about the inspection**

The inspectors looked at a range of documentation including: leaders' self-evaluation of the school's performance and plans for improvement; evaluations of the quality of teaching and learning; school policies; the most recent data on the attainment and progress of pupils; information relating to the safeguarding of pupils; the most recent data relating to the attendance of pupils and information relating to exclusions.

The inspectors visited a range of lessons across the school. They looked at pupils' current workbooks and learning journeys across a range of subjects. Meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders and leaders of designated areas, including safeguarding and the use of the pupil premium; a group of pupils from key stages 1 and 2; a representative from the local authority; members of the governing body; and teachers and teaching assistants.

The inspectors considered the range and quality of information provided on the school's website.