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Mr Paul Evans
Acting Headteacher
Southgate School
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Dear Mr Evans

Short inspection of Southgate School

Following my visit to the school on 21 November 2018 with Suzette Garland-Grimes, 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 March 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

The last inspection took place some time before your recent appointment as acting headteacher. Since then, you have led the school with purpose and determination. You have developed and improved the school for the benefit of your pupils and staff. You have dealt with the impact of significant turbulence regarding the relocation of the school and the change of senior leadership with passion and a clarity of vision.

Your staff team supports you very well and embraces the improvements and changes that you are bringing about. Staff enjoy the benefits of your determination to decrease their workload. You have identified further areas where this can occur. Staff morale is very high and staff are excited to be on the journey with you. They appreciate the level of communication and understand that this also serves to develop them professionally.

However, the quality of teaching at the school is not consistently good or better. Some staff plan, teach and resource highly effective lessons where pupils make strong progress towards their targets. In other classes, this high standard is not always evident. You are aware of this and tiered measures of support are in place for those who need it.

Governors are highly supportive of your leadership and the school. They provide challenge and hold you to account for the outcomes of pupils. Your governors take a genuine interest in the school and visit frequently. They spend a great deal of time at school when pupils are present. They take part in learning walks, lesson observations and practical aspects of pupils' learning. As a result, they understand the school very well.

Areas for improvement, identified in the last inspection report, have been partially achieved. You acknowledge that there is still work to do to ensure that these, and other areas for improvement that you have identified, continue to be a focus.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Policies and procedures linked to safeguarding are up to date. You are further developing the culture of safeguarding at the school. Staff receive regular training to further develop safeguarding. Staff and governors are aware of their responsibilities in ensuring that pupils are kept safe. They are aware of the procedures that they must follow, if they have any concern, no matter how small.

Leaders and staff work very effectively with parents and carers. You provide a high level of support and advice when, and where, necessary. You also engage with many professional external agencies to ensure that support is in place for pupils and children.

Pupils feel safe in school and have an awareness of how to keep themselves safe. They know about bullying and are positive that, should it occur, members of staff would help them deal with it.

Most parents support the school and are positive about the nurturing ethos and care that staff provide. 'I think Southgate School is a fantastic school that caters for children across all ages that have significant learning issues,' is typical of the feedback received.

Transportation arrangements for pupils are highly organised and many positive routines are in place. Staff encourage independence. For example, many pupils can leave their buses and make their way into school safely on their own.

The behaviour of pupils is generally good. A significant increase in pupil numbers and a change in pupil admission criteria have resulted in more pupils with significant behavioural difficulties. Current systems and expectations are not quite robust enough to fully meet the needs of these pupils.

Inspection findings

- Most pupils make good progress from their starting points throughout the school. You ensure that staff carry out accurate assessment when pupils start school. They continue to do this regularly and accurately.

- Staff accurately set short-term targets based on the pupils' longer-term targets from their education, health and care plans. These are then used to plan and teach lessons that allow pupils to work towards achievement of their targets. Staff keep targets up to date and review them regularly.
- Many pupils at Southgate School engage and make the most progress when lessons are interesting and motivating. However, this is not consistent throughout school. Some lessons do not provide the right amount of stimulation required for the pupils. Currently, there are few opportunities for homework to be provided. Pupils and parents would like this to increase and become a regular feature of pupils' learning.
- All pupils have many opportunities to take part in outdoor activities and learning. These include swimming, climbing and garden school. Older pupils have opportunities to take part in residential experiences.
- Staff encourage pupils to be independent where possible. This occurs in lessons and around school. Pupils enjoy this aspect of school life. They work well together and frequently support each other with their learning.
- Your curriculum has three different pathways for the pupils to follow: Forest, Orchard and Woodland. This is to consider the three main learning needs of pupils. This method is effective in supporting staff to pitch their planning at the appropriate level.
- Pupils are polite and show respect to others. They are extremely friendly and welcoming to visitors. Pupils are highly inclusive and recognise that we are not all the same. They appreciate the differences in others.
- Pupils understand what bullying is. They know what to do, should it occur. Pupils are confident that staff will deal well with bullying if necessary. Pupils have learned about keeping healthy and how they should make healthy choices. One pupil told me, 'The healthier you are, the more years you will live.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of teaching is consistently high across the whole school, resulting in strong and sustained progress for all pupils
- staff gain a thorough understanding of how to deal with challenging behaviour more effectively.

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

Yours sincerely

Sara Roe
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, the inspectors discussed the work of the school with you, the deputy headteacher and the lead for safeguarding. Inspectors also talked to six members of the governing body, including the chair. We closely examined the information about pupils' progress and analysed pupils' learning in their workbooks and learning journals. The inspection team checked a range of documentation, including leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness, external evaluations of aspects of the school's work and minutes of meetings of the governing body. I considered 12 written responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, and 56 responses to the staff survey. The team visited all classes to observe teaching, learning and assessment. We were accompanied by a member of the senior leadership team to all lesson observations. A formal discussion was held with eight pupils. Both inspectors talked more informally to pupils in lessons and around school.