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Mrs P Selby
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Dear Mrs Selby

Short inspection of Keelman's Way School

Following my visit to the school on 3 October 2018 with Zoe Westerley, 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 judged to be good in January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have created an ethos in the school that promotes pupils' well-being above all else. Staff responding to Ofsted's survey say that they are proud to be part of the school. Staff foster positive relationships with the pupils of all ages through their enthusiastic, sensitive, compassionate and kind approach. The parents, students in the sixth form and the pupils in the main school clearly appreciate the work that staff do to understand the complexity of their needs. Pupils are welcomed into the spacious, well-resourced building by adults each morning. Staff skilfully tailor resources to enable pupils to access their learning. Consequently, pupils in the school make progress academically, socially and in terms of their life skills. Pupils are enthusiastic, lively and inquisitive. Their positive attitudes make them a delight to talk to. They enjoy their learning because of the engaging tasks that they participate in.

In response to the areas for improvement at the last inspection, to improve the school's use of assessment data to check precisely the performance of the most able pupils and also to ensure that the most able pupils are stretched to do their best, leaders have moved to a new curriculum model and new assessment system. There is evidence in school of assessment data which gives a strong indication that pupils are making good progress. However, it is as yet unclear if the most able pupils are being stretched to do their best.

In the sixth form, students are being well prepared for a more independent future due to a greater focus on developing skills through work experience programmes. There is also heavy emphasis on developing pupils' independent living skills. This

supports pupils to make good progress. However, targets for the most able pupils in key stages 1, 2, 3 and 4 will need to be carefully overviewed to ensure that they are challenging enough to promote the progress that the pupils are capable of achieving. To better support this area the school will embed the new curriculum planning and assessment systems so leaders can better evaluate the progress across academic subjects. This strategic overview is particularly important as the needs of pupils in the school are becoming increasingly diverse.

Parents were very positive about the school's work. The parents who spoke to inspectors highlighted the care and commitment demonstrated by the staff team and the significant support that you and your staff team give to pupils and their families.

Safeguarding is effective.

In practical terms there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Leaders and governors place a strong emphasis on the importance of safeguarding. All staff know that pupils and students are vulnerable. Staff work well with other agencies to meet the needs of those in your care. This ensures that pupils feel safe and have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Your staff provide the highest levels of care, guidance and support.

Some of the systems of recording and the strategic overview of aspects of the safeguarding records are in need of some improvement. However, it was clear that all staff act swiftly to take appropriate action if they have any concerns. Staff are trained and updated on safeguarding matters regularly. Leaders recognised that aspects of the safeguarding training relating to the 'Prevent' duty needed to be reviewed.

Inspection findings

- As part of this inspection we focused on a number of key lines of enquiry. The first of these was to look at the progress made by pupils from their starting points. Staff have very positive interaction with the pupils in their care. Adults employ a range of different strategies to match the learning of pupils to their specific needs. Pupils engage in their education because it is relevant and enjoyable. Their work records show a strong emphasis on developing pupils' independent living skills. Staff support pupils' behaviour to create positive learning environments. In the sixth form, students make even better progress because of the opportunities they have to apply their skills in subjects other than English and mathematics. For those students who have profound and multiple learning difficulties, highly effective support is provided for them to make sense of the world around them. For example, in classrooms the space and resources are carefully used. The use of quiet spaces, technology and specialised equipment are adapted for each individual in ways to best enhance their experiences in school.
- Teaching and learning in key stages 1, 2, 3 and 4 are reflected well in pupils' records of learning. As a result, the progress pupils make is good. However, it

has been hard for the school to demonstrate that the targets being set for the most able are challenging enough. You are expecting the new system to support you to be able to demonstrate this in the near future. Although you prioritise pupils' personal and social development targets, the academic rigour is not so clear.

- I was also interested in how the school leaders have ensured that the quality teaching seen at the last inspection has been maintained and continues to have a positive impact on achievement over time. It was clear that staff have an understanding of pupils' needs and there are strong, trusting relationships between staff and pupils. This, and the very clear focus on the needs of the individual child, has led to a pupil-focused approach to teaching and learning. The lesson observations, work scrutiny, conversations with pupils, staff and parents, together with the data that we analysed during the inspection, reflected the leaders' view that teaching and learning continues to have a positive impact on achievement over time for the pupils in school.
- The final line of enquiry we looked at was the curriculum the school is offering and the teaching of the curriculum. The school described their curriculum as evolving over time, moving away from a subject-based curriculum to a more topic based approach. You explained that this approach has been taken to allow much more personalised planning. Although at an early stage, you feel this approach is having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes. During the inspection it was evident that the pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum which teachers use to plan engaging activities. Pupils were actively engaged in tasks and displayed enjoyment and interest in the lessons. The school's focus on developing life skills comes to fruition when students in the sixth form experience their work placements. Work experience provides students with rich opportunities to practise their skills in a real working environment.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the new assessment system is embedded efficiently and the impact is evaluated to ensure that it is fit for purpose for all groups of pupils in school
- they can clearly demonstrate that the most able pupils are being set challenging targets which will help them to make rapid progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Garton
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you and governors to discuss safeguarding and aspects of school leadership and management. Inspectors visited 17 classes to observe teaching and learning and analysed pupils' learning records. Inspectors spoke to your school improvement person, pupils and students in the sixth form, informally during lessons, about their work and with the elected school council to talk about their experiences at the school. Inspectors reviewed safeguarding documentation, including the school's record of checks for behaviour incidents and reviewed safeguarding arrangements. Inspectors also reviewed documentation which included the monitoring of teaching and learning, the school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses and the school development plan. The lead inspector took into account 18 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 37 responses to the staff survey.