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Mr Dominic Wall  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Wall

### **Short inspection of Southfield School**

Following my visit to the school on 4 December 2018 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 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.

Since the last inspection, you have maintained a strong focus on meeting the needs of each pupil. The number of pupils entering the school has increased sharply over recent years and, at the same time, the school is supporting a greater number of pupils with complex needs. Despite these pressures, at the heart of the school is your strong commitment to meeting the needs of every pupil. In the light of these changes, you have ensured that the curriculum is effective in preparing pupils for adulthood and their place in the community. Your vision that pupils should learn to be confident, resilient and independent learners is matched by inspectors' observations. Pupils have positive attitudes to school, they are proud of their achievements, and were confident to speak to inspectors about their work.

Following the last inspection, you and leaders revised the curriculum to ensure that it is effective in preparing pupils for adulthood. There are strong pastoral arrangements to help Year 7 pupils settle quickly, as they move from their primary school. Throughout the school, there is a strong emphasis on the practical use of literacy and numeracy skills. Staff help pupils understand that they will use this knowledge both at school and in the community. For example, pupils in a key stage 3 mathematics lesson understood that learning to tell the time on a digital clock would help them read a bus timetable.

The curriculum at key stage 4 and in the sixth form is based on the accreditation of

pupils' practical and vocational skills. The well-structured sixth form prepares students effectively for the next stage in their education, employment or training. Pupils and their parents are helped to make decisions about these next steps through the school's careers education programme. The innovative project, using a classroom base at Bradford Royal Infirmary, enables some sixth form students to move successfully from school to employment in the hospital. Most school leavers are similarly successful in moving to continuing education, employment, training or social care.

You have responded effectively to higher than usual staff turnover in recent years, as a result of experienced staff retiring from school. You have successfully recruited teachers and support staff from both special and mainstream schools. You understand that all staff need the right knowledge and skills to support the increasing number of pupils with complex needs. In response, you have established a clear and comprehensive staff training programme. It incorporates performance management reviews for teachers and support staff with professional development targets linked to the school improvement plan. You and your governors understand that, as it continues to grow, the school needs to develop its own workforce. As a consequence, leaders have established Southfield School as a teaching school, working with other schools in the local area to offer initial specialist teacher training.

Parents told inspectors that you are a dedicated headteacher and that they value your leadership and the support staff provide. Parents welcome communication with staff and say that leaders are always quick to respond to any concerns. Parents feel that their views are listened to and that they are encouraged to make a positive contribution to their children's education. One parent commented: 'My son has grown so much in confidence since he has been at this school. He feels safe and is happy. As a parent of a child with autism, I feel so lucky that he gets all the help and support that he needs.' Another parent added: 'My child is very happy here. She feels she belongs, the teachers understand her, and she enjoys school'. Parents value the transition arrangements that helped their children start school. They appreciate the support provided in planning for the next stage in their children's education, employment or training when they leave school.

Staff are proud to work at Southfield School, they feel respected and most think that the school has continued to improve since the last inspection. Staff believe that pupils are helped to make good progress, that pupils are safe, and that the staff team works effectively together to help them behave well.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a strong and shared safeguarding culture throughout the school, which is supported by designated leaders in each key stage. Leaders have introduced an online recording system that enables a prompt response to concerns and the detailed analysis of safeguarding information. Leaders meet regularly to discuss safeguarding concerns and to decide on next steps to protect pupils. Leaders provide detailed reports to governors, who check safeguarding

arrangements through a link governor and a governors' scrutiny group. Leaders challenge the decisions of other agencies and services when they consider that the needs of pupils are not being met. Governors and leaders have completed training in safer recruitment procedures. The school's record of recruitment checks is complete and meets government requirements.

Leaders attend regular safeguarding training. Update information is shared promptly with staff and governors through the school's programme of regular safeguarding training. As a result, staff and governors are kept informed of changes in guidance and legislation. Staff know what to do when they have a concern and are knowledgeable about the risks that pupils face. For example, leaders are vigilant about the safeguarding risks from some mobile phone applications. They meet regularly to share information, consult pupils about the apps that they use, and then teach pupils how to keep safe, if they use them at home.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school. They know that staff will respond promptly to any concerns that they have. Sometimes pupils share their concerns with parents and members of the community and need encouragement to share these with staff. All the parents that spoke to an inspector agree that their children are safe in school and almost all staff agree. Pupils learn how to stay safe online in lessons, lunchtime clubs and special assemblies. Information about being safe online is shared with parents in e-safety workshops and on the school website. The arrangements for pupils arriving at, and leaving, school are well organised and supervised by staff.

## **Inspection findings**

- Inspectors started by checking whether the school is a safe place for pupils. Inspectors' observations, our assessment of the school's culture, policies and procedures, and our discussions with leaders, staff, pupils and parents confirmed that safeguarding is effective.
- We wanted to check how leaders had tackled the areas for improvement at the last inspection. At that time leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching, so more is outstanding, by:
  - ensuring that all lessons are stimulating to capture students' interest and maximise learning
  - finding ways in which students can meaningfully contribute to communicating how well they think they have done in a lesson to build their confidence
  - making sure that, as far as possible, marking is consistent with the school's own policy and helps students improve their work
  - planning work and using resources which are matched to students' age as well as taking account of their abilities
  - continuing to share best practice to develop the skills and expertise of teachers and teaching assistants who are new to special education.
- Inspectors saw evidence that leaders have been successful in tackling a number

of these priorities. For example, an inspector visited a lesson in the school library where a class of key stage 3 pupils with complex needs were learning to develop an interest in books. Staff used symbols and signing to support pupils' learning, and pupils used signs to communicate their understanding to staff. However, staff did not use signing consistently in all lessons, at breaktime or at lunchtime. Inspectors saw evidence of marking in pupils' workbooks that provided feedback on how pupils can improve their work and the next steps in their learning. In most lessons, activities are well matched to pupils' abilities. However, in some lessons, pupils were unable to take part as fully as they might, because specialist resources were not used. Leaders have been successful in developing a training programme to develop the skills of teachers and teaching assistants new to special education. Leaders plan to develop this further, as the school becomes established as a teaching school.

- Next, inspectors wanted to understand how leaders checked that all pupils were making good or better progress, and how they ensured that quality of teaching and learning was strong across the school. Inspectors looked at assessment information and the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan. Leaders' assessment of pupils' progress was detailed and indicated that most pupils make good or better progress. During our classroom visits, staff described using the desired outcomes in pupils' education, health and care plans to identify teaching targets. Inspectors' observations were that the assessment evidence collected in some lessons did not always match pupils' targets. In some cases, the assessment records for those pupils with the most complex needs were not up to date. Leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching was detailed and evaluative, and where areas for improvement were identified, these were tackled promptly through the school's staff development programme.
- Leaders' self-evaluation provides a detailed description of the school's strengths and areas for development. Areas for school improvement have been identified as a result of a recent whole-school review with a peer headteacher. However, leaders' self-evaluation is descriptive, with little evaluation of how they have reached their judgment about the school's effectiveness. In addition, the targets for school improvement are not described sufficiently precisely to enable leaders and governors to measure progress and understand the intended impact on pupils' outcomes.
- We wanted to check how leaders were using additional funding such as pupil premium funding and Year 7 catch-up funding to improve pupils' outcomes. Leaders have used this funding effectively. For example, Year 7 pupils have been helped to settle quickly and effectively into the school through the support of behaviour mentors. Funding has also been used to help pupils catch up with the development of their literacy and numeracy skills, when they have fallen behind their peers. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make as good progress as, and sometimes better progress than, other pupils. Leaders use additional funding to improve pupils' attendance, develop stronger links with parents, and to provide short-term support for school transport.
- Inspectors wanted to understand the actions that leaders are taking to improve attendance of all groups of pupils and reduce the number of pupils that are persistently absent. Leaders' analysis indicates that attendance has improved

gradually over recent years and is now broadly the same as in other similar schools. Leaders know each pupil particularly well. They understand that, as a result of their complex health needs, some pupils are unable to attend school for extended periods. Leaders have used additional funding to employ supplementary staff to develop stronger links between home and school. These staff work with pupils at home when they are unable to attend school. Leaders know promptly when and why each pupil is absent, so they can be assured of each pupil's safety.

- Inspectors wanted to understand whether governance is effective. The school is part of the Southfield Grange Trust. The local governing body is supported by the board of trustees. Leaders have worked effectively to develop the work of the governing body and governors have recently recruited new members with a range of skills. Governors are asked to record their skills and experience when they join the governing body. However, they have not had the opportunity, as a group, to check that they have a comprehensive set of skills necessary to lead the school. Individual governors have developed a link responsibility for different aspects of the work of the school, such as the curriculum, progress and safeguarding. This work is developing with the introduction of governors' scrutiny groups. Leaders provide governors with regular reports about the school's performance. However, governors do not always challenge leaders about the content of these reports, nor are they effectively involved in preparing the school's self-evaluation and identifying areas for school improvement.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- governors are involved in preparing the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, and that these include measurable targets to improve the outcomes for pupils
- the school's assessment system is implemented consistently and monitored effectively to ensure that all pupils make good or better progress
- staff use appropriate levels of signing support in order that all pupils can understand and participate in activities as fully as possible.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bradford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

George Gilmore  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, inspectors met with you and members of the senior leadership team to discuss the key lines of enquiry for the inspection, and throughout the inspection to discuss the inspection evidence gathered.

Meetings were held with four parents, as there were few responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. Inspectors considered two responses to the Ofsted free-text service from parents. A meeting was held with three governors, including the chair of the governing body and a member of the board of trustees.

Inspectors observed pupils arriving at school, at lunchtime and as they moved around the school. Inspectors visited lessons, accompanied by leaders, spoke to pupils and looked at their work. They spoke to teachers and support staff about lesson planning, pupils' outcomes and record-keeping. Inspectors looked at pupils' workbooks, curriculum plans, schemes of work and assessment records. An inspector met members of the school council.

Inspectors looked at the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan and discussed these with you and senior leaders and governors. Inspectors discussed the curriculum, pupils' progress and assessment information with you and senior leaders. An inspector had meetings with the leaders responsible for safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and the use of pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding. Inspectors looked at a range of information including, pupil files; education, health and care plans; peer review reports and school policies. Inspectors considered 52 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and two responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire.