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Mrs Anne Redmond  
Executive Principal  
Kingfisher Special School  
Foxdenton Lane  
Chadderton  
Oldham  
Lancashire  
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Dear Mrs Redmond

### **Short inspection of Kingfisher Special School**

Following my visit to the school on 11 June 2019 with Ailsa Moore, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be outstanding in December 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school converted to an academy in September 2016. Experienced and skilled trust members and governors were swiftly appointed. Roles and responsibilities for leaders at all levels are clearly defined. Governors know the school well, hold leaders to account and have the quality of education in the school at the heart of everything they do. Trust members, governors and leaders have a clear, determined vision and direction for the school. This vision is shared by staff, parents and carers. There is a culture of continuous improvement in Kingfisher Special School, driven by the strong conviction that its pupils will be safe and happy learners.

Staff know pupils extremely well. They take the time to assess their needs and find the 'hook' that will work to engage them in learning. Sensory diets are personalised to each pupil's specific needs and skilfully planned so that pupils are more settled and ready to learn.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They feel a part of the school family and talk with passion about the difference the school has made to their children. Typical comments included how their child has 'come on in leaps and bounds' and 'made fantastic progress' and further comments such as, 'I never thought he would be able to do the things he is doing.' They all agree that their children are happy and love school. They also agree as parents that they are very

lucky to have Kingfisher Special School and would wholeheartedly recommend it to other parents.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. The designated lead for safeguarding and the pastoral lead are quick to respond to any concerns. They take appropriate and timely action, including referrals to the local authority and other agencies.

The governor with responsibility for safeguarding takes an active and consistent role in supporting and challenging the safeguarding team. This includes making the required checks on members of staff.

Staff have a strong knowledge and understanding of safeguarding procedures. They receive regular training, updates and support from leaders. Parents are very satisfied with the way any concerns are listened to and acted on. They also appreciate the open and supportive ethos in the school.

### **Inspection findings**

- One of the lines of enquiry I explored with you was how the creative curriculum supports the individual needs of pupils. The curriculum is child-led and continuously reviewed to ensure that it meets the needs of each and every pupil in the school. A wide programme of enrichment activities works to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, language days are used to immerse pupils in the culture, music, language and food of a specific country. Classroom environments are well thought through so that they meet the sensory and learning needs of the individual pupils. This allows them to engage in learning with more independence and focus. Staff have been supported to take risks in trying new methods and resources. The creative curriculum alongside these new approaches is having a direct positive impact on pupils' progress. For example, some pupils showed a dramatic improvement in handwriting over a three-month period following the introduction of a new method to develop fine motor skills. This active approach to improve teaching and learning is ready to be shared with other schools.
- Another line of enquiry I explored with you was how leaders use additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils and whether it is having a positive impact. Governors are very clear in their belief that the use of the funding is to widen pupils' experiences so that disadvantaged pupils have access to the same life-enriching cultural events that other pupils may have. For example, pupils regularly visit art galleries, a donkey sanctuary, the beach, restaurants, local parks and The Bridgewater Hall. This rich variety of experiences develops their social, emotional, physical and communication skills as well as broadening their cultural experiences. Funding is also used to provide a rich variety of therapeutic support including play therapy, massage, yoga and physical interventions. This works to meet disadvantaged pupils' emotional, sensory and physical needs so that they

are less anxious, can regulate their emotions and are able to engage in learning. Through the well-thought-out and planned use of additional funding disadvantaged pupils are making the same outstanding progress as other pupils.

- I also explored with you the progress pupils make from their starting points. Teachers' detailed assessment and knowledge of every pupil alongside careful planning works to engage pupils in their learning. As a result, they are making exceptional progress over time. The creative use of resources within each classroom allows pupils to learn and communicate in their own unique way. Pupils of all abilities are settled and ready to learn. They move seamlessly and quickly from sensory time back to learning. This is because staff have implemented successful routines and procedures to meet their personal needs. Leaders have developed a new system over the last few years so that the holistic progress of pupils can be accurately recorded. The small steps in progress are then shared with parents. Parents are very happy with the personalised approach the school takes and appreciate the regular updates they receive on their children's progress.
- My final line of enquiry looked at pupils' attendance. Leaders monitor and track attendance carefully, including the attendance of particular groups of pupils. The pastoral team works closely with parents to remove barriers to attendance. While staff are sensitive to pupils' individual needs, they also reinforce the importance of education alongside the wider social benefits for pupils when they attend school. The number of pupils with long-term health needs or life-limiting conditions is having a negative impact on whole-school attendance. However, school leaders and pastoral staff are doing all they can to support pupils and parents in these cases.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they share their expertise and teaching-and-learning research findings with other schools.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Bather  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, inspectors met with you and your senior leaders. They held a meeting with members of the trust and the governing body, including the trust chair and the governing body chair. They met with the safeguarding leads and scrutinised paperwork and safeguarding records, including the record of checks completed on staff. Joint learning walks with leaders were completed and pupils' books and learning records were scrutinised. There were eight free-text responses to Parent View, Ofsted's questionnaire for parents. Inspectors also met with parents formally and informally throughout the day. There were 34 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff and inspectors spoke with staff formally and informally during the day. They also met formally with a small group of pupils and spoke informally to pupils throughout the day. They observed behaviour in lessons and around the school. Documents were scrutinised, including information about pupils' progress; the school's self-evaluation; the school improvement plan; records of pupils' attendance and information relating to the work of the governing body.