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Ms Sarah McLay
Headteacher
Vale School
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Dear Ms McLay

Short inspection of Vale School

Following my visit to the school on 18 June 2019 with Fran Fitzgerald, 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 October 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 governing body provides clear strategic leadership, and offers effective support and challenge to you and your staff. Since the last inspection, leaders have implemented a number of school improvement strategies that have strengthened the provision for pupils. This has included putting measures in place to ensure that the most able pupils are challenged effectively.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about their school, and report a sense of pride in being part of Vale School. They feel that they have the support of school leaders, agreeing that the school is well managed.

You make the most of being co-located with mainstream schools, with many pupils on successful part-time and full-time placements. This practice is well established. The environment is inclusive, and there are many opportunities for mainstream inclusion; pupils develop resilience, and get to feel part of a wider community. Parents highly value this integrated approach. Although the school is based across four sites, there is a strong sense of community that is shared by all.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders and governors have established a safe culture that is visible throughout the school. All staff receive appropriate safeguarding training. This has ensured that safeguarding responsibilities throughout the school are taken extremely seriously. Fortnightly

multi-agency safeguarding meetings make sure that high- and low-level concerns are managed meticulously. Also, your outreach team provides vital support for pupils who would otherwise be unable to receive an education for medical reasons.

The pupils and their families that I spoke to reported that your school is a safe place to be, and that staff at your school genuinely care about every child. Parents and carers speak very highly of the school. They feel that home-school communication is excellent, and that the 'leadership are here to listen to us'. Another parent told me that 'these people are human!'.

Pupils are always treated with dignity and respect, and staff have high expectations around behaviour. Consequently, the pupils are a credit to the school, and are exceptionally polite and courteous.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed the key lines of enquiry. This inspection focused on the impact of leaders' actions to ensure consistently high standards across your four sites. I also looked at how well pupils' communication needs are met, and how well the curriculum prepares them for the wider world. Lastly, I focused on how successful leaders have been at ensuring that all pupils make the best possible progress.
- Leaders are aware of the importance of consistency across the four sites, particularly around planning and giving pupils feedback. All teachers plan lessons carefully to match individual pupils' levels and goals. Throughout the school, pupils are becoming increasingly engaged with lessons and curious about learning. However, teachers do not yet consistently capture what pupils know or have learned. To build leadership capacity, and reduce variability, you have begun to develop your middle leaders.
- Leaders, including the communication lead, have a clear vision and strategy to support pupils with their communication needs. Highly effective partnership work with speech and language therapists has helped train school staff to use a range of communication support strategies, including signing, touch cues and symbol-based support. As a result, the whole community, including governors and parents, understand the importance of removing communication barriers. There is a clear rationale for the communication systems used, and every pupil has a plan that is usually followed. However, despite this, there is still some variation in the use of communication approaches. For example, signing is not widely used, and some communication systems are not used as intended. As a result, the impact of these interventions is limited. Leaders are fully aware of this, and a plan is in place to support staff where this issue has been recognised.
- Work is in progress to further develop your curriculum in response to the changing needs of your pupils. This will ensure that all pupils are able to achieve well at what is important to, and for, them. The parents I spoke to told me that they feel totally involved in the planning for the new curriculum.
- Leaders make good use of data to identify curriculum areas that are doing less well, for example science last year. After a significant amount of work, this

subject is now seen as a strength by governors, parents and pupils.

- Teaching staff have an in-depth knowledge of pupils' special educational needs, and, are able to set purposeful and meaningful targets. Regular assessments allow leaders to swiftly put interventions in place if pupils are at risk of falling behind. Consequently, almost all pupils make expected progress or better in English and mathematics. External moderation with local schools means that you are confident your levels are secure, and that your targets are challenging. Leaders have trialled several assessment tools and have used what they have learned to create their own bespoke system. This will be introduced in September, and aims to better capture the small steps in English and mathematics that your pupils make.
- Pupils know what they and their peers are working towards. They celebrate not just in their own, but also their classmates' achievements. Pupils are proud of their school, and one pupil was excited to tell me that he felt the school was 'unique'. Other pupils used their communication devices to tell me that the school was 'amazing' and 'fantastic'. Pupils' social, emotional, health and behavioural needs are well supported. Opportunities for work towards these personal development goals are carefully planned. However, progress towards meeting these goals is not yet measured and as a result, the leaders do not know the full impact of their interventions.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- agreed communication strategies are effectively and consistently implemented throughout the school
- you continue to develop the work you have begun with your middle leaders to provide consistent standards of teaching and learning
- you are able to track the small steps pupils make, including in personal development, to target support even more effectively.

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

Yours sincerely

Francis Gonzalez
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, the inspection team held a number of meetings with you and other senior leaders. You accompanied inspectors on a series of short visits to lessons across all four sites. The inspection team held discussions with different

leaders about safeguarding, the curriculum, removing barriers to learning, and measuring pupils' progress. I met with with the chair of governors and four other governors. A meeting was also held with a group of pupils, a group of parents, and a group of staff. The inspection team worked with senior leaders to scrutinise pupils' work and assessment information on pupils' progress. The inspectors looked at a range of documentation. This included the improvement plan, attendance data, records of pupils' progress and behaviour, and evidence of records to keep pupils safe. The inspection took into consideration 32 responses to the staff survey. There were seven responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey.