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Mrs S Seddon
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Dear Mrs Seddon

Short inspection of The Coppice School

Following my visit to the school on 16 January 2019 with Julie Morley, 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 November 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. As a new leadership team, you have worked with your staff to create a shared vision and clear direction for the school. A strong partnership with parents and carers is the foundation stone of the school. Staff work with parents during their children's induction to ensure that pupils are settled on arrival in school and that staff know the pupils' needs well. Typically, parents commented, 'The Coppice School has a real vision for the future, they are constantly striving to provide the absolute best for our children and young people.'

Leaders and staff place great value on education, health and care plans. In agreement with parents, targets are set which are then broken down by teachers into realistic steps of progress. The progress made by each pupil over time is clear to see through the meticulous recording in school records. The most able pupils benefit from attending classes in the local mainstream school. This allows them to access learning that is both engaging and challenging. For example, records of progress for two pupils show how they successfully access science lessons and learn to use scientific equipment. Although the progress of pupils is clearly evidenced in individual records, leaders need to further develop their assessment system so that whole-school progress information can be analysed more readily to better inform school self-evaluation.

You have worked well to address the areas for improvement from the last inspection. There has been a determined focus to improve staff knowledge and

understanding of autism spectrum disorder (ASD). There is now a whole-school, well-embedded approach to managing the specific needs of pupils on the autistic spectrum. This good practice was recognised by the National Autistic Society (NAS) when the school gained the Autism Accreditation Award in September 2018. In individual classrooms and across the school, strategies to support pupils with ASD are embedded. For example, a consistent communication model ensures that pupils can communicate their feelings and needs and are able to respond to questions. Teachers plan carefully to meet each pupil's sensory needs so pupils can fully engage in the learning process. School's own assessment information shows that the vast majority of pupils with ASD now make expected progress in English and mathematics. This is a good improvement from the previous inspection. Leaders have also implemented a rigorous programme of monitoring to better evaluate the quality of learning. The leadership team is committed to continued training for all staff. As a result, there is a strong culture of improvement which is threaded throughout the school. For example, staff are still involved in a working party following the NAS accreditation to continue to drive improvements around ASD provision. The commitment to develop a range of leaders has resulted in shared expertise across the school and this has had a positive impact on pupils' progress, development and outcomes. Staff at all levels feel empowered and are proud to work at The Coppice School.

Since the last inspection, the governing body has also strengthened its skills. Governors have undertaken training and are now better equipped to challenge leaders and hold them to account. Governors have worked with the leadership team to gain first-hand knowledge of the school's work. Visits to school with a specific focus have helped governors to understand how the school's communication model supports pupils with ASD. Governors have also focused on pupils with complex needs and have a better understanding of how the school supports and meets these pupils' needs well.

Safeguarding is effective.

The safeguarding team ensures that all safeguarding systems and procedures are robust. Records are completed in detail and concerns are followed up in a timely manner. The designated safeguarding lead follows up any referrals made to the local authority. Outcomes and actions are clearly recorded.

Leaders work well to support children and families who need early help. They are proud of the strong relationships they have with parents and as parents typically commented, 'The Coppice is like a family: the children are happy and so well cared for.'

The culture of safeguarding in the school is strong. Staff training is thorough and up to date. Staff know their pupils' needs in great detail. Consequently, staff are sensitive to any changes in behaviour that may indicate a cause for concern.

Inspection findings

- One of the key lines of enquiry I explored with you was around the effectiveness of the curriculum. Leaders have worked with teaching staff to design a curriculum that enables pupils to move through each key stage seamlessly. Throughout each key stage, pupils' personal, social, physical, communication and language skills are the key foci. Learning how to become independent is also an essential aspect of the curriculum. Teachers plan effectively so that pupils undertake sometimes small, independent steps towards their learning goals. For example, through many months of progress, one pupil is now able to take his own coat off and place it on his coat hanger independently. This is just one example of how well the curriculum meets the individual needs of pupils. It is well embedded and provides pupils with a range of topics throughout the year which support pupils' learning well. You plan to develop the curriculum even further so that all pupils can benefit from a broader range of topics, enabling pupils to make even better progress.
- Pupils are well prepared for their next steps in life. Leaders have embedded a culture of high expectations where self-care and independence are a priority. Leaders work closely with students, parents, other schools, colleges and organisations to make sure that pupils are ready and able to move into their chosen provision once they leave The Coppice School. Key stage 4 pupils and college students benefit from a bespoke work experience programme. This is tailored to suit the pupils' wishes and abilities. Some pupils access work experience within school. They undertake roles in the office or work with the site supervisor to maintain the building and grounds. Other pupils access local businesses for work experience, including an engineering firm, a local fast-food restaurant and the local council offices. Previously, the most able students have moved on to study at local colleges, undertaking a range of courses including animal care.
- Another line of enquiry considered pupils' attendance. Leaders monitor and track pupils' attendance closely and identify quickly where patterns of poor attendance begin to emerge. They then intervene early and work with families to overcome any barriers. As a result, pupils' attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now in line with that in similar schools nationally.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they further develop the curriculum so that pupils gain more breadth in their knowledge and so make even stronger progress
- they further develop assessment systems so that leaders can quickly analyse pupils' progress against their targets in the education, health and care plan.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Bather
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you and senior leaders. We held a meeting with two members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of Lancashire local authority. Inspectors met with safeguarding leaders and scrutinised paperwork and safeguarding records, including the record of checks completed on staff. Visits to classes and other areas were undertaken jointly with leaders and pupils' books and learning records were scrutinised. There were nine responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents (Parent View) and inspectors met with nine parents. Inspectors took account of the 21 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff, spoke to staff during the day and also met formally with a small group of staff. Inspectors spoke with pupils informally during the day and met with six pupils. They observed behaviour in lessons and around the school. Documents were scrutinised, including: information about pupils' progress; the school's self-evaluation; the school's improvement plan; records of pupils' attendance; and information relating to the work of the governing body.