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26 June 2017

Mrs Stela Plamenova  
The Grantham Sandon School  
Sandon Close  
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Grantham  
Lincolnshire  
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Dear Mrs Plamenova

### **Short inspection of The Grantham Sandon School**

Following my visit to the school on 14 June 2017 with Caroline Oliver, 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 outstanding in February 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have successfully built on the school's qualities to ensure that the school continues to improve and provide a high standard of education for all pupils. The local governing body and the Community Inclusive Trust know the school well and provide effective support and challenge to school leaders to ensure that the high standards are maintained. The trust provides a range of training opportunities for staff to continually improve their performance. You and your team are highly committed professionals and ensure that the pupils receive excellent teaching and care. Staff morale is high.

The school has a strong focus on providing therapeutic support to enable the pupils to learn. You have a range of therapies available to meet the personal needs of the pupils. These include reflexology, equine, music and speech and language therapy. The speech and language teaching assistant works closely with the speech and language therapist to deliver individualised provision. One pupil had a computer tablet and was able to express his opinions about a text by clicking on pictures. The teaching assistant skilfully encouraged another pupil to self-correct by sounding out letters and using picture clues. Parents receive feedback about how well their child is progressing in these sessions and welcome the activities they are given at home to support their child's development.

You have successfully promoted pupils' communication skills. For some pupils, this has included giving them communication passports to help them to communicate with others using symbols. Staff use these well to ask pupils questions and enable a response. At lunchtime, pupils can use computer tablets to click on pictures of food that they want to eat. Midday supervisors have picture clues and symbols to ask pupils if they want more food or are thirsty. The incidents of poor behaviour have reduced sharply in the current academic year because pupils can express themselves.

At your last inspection, the inspectors asked you to improve how you check the progress of pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties. You have a comprehensive system for checking the progress of pupils. In lessons, teachers and teaching assistants assess how well pupils are meeting their targets. The school moderates the teachers' assessments with other schools to check that they are accurate. Finally, leaders review pupils' progress four times during the year and implement a range of intervention programmes if a pupil has not made expected progress. Current pupils are making outstanding progress from their starting points.

Also at the last inspection, the inspectors asked you to ensure that there are more opportunities in place to develop pupils' spirituality. You have been successful with this aspect of pupils' development. Pupils are encouraged to have a sense of enjoyment about their learning, to be creative and to reflect on their experiences. At the end of each school day, pupils have reflection time to think about their learning and others. The Rhubarb Theatre company has visited the school and pupils appreciated their performance of drama, sound and humour.

Following this visit, I have asked that you check more closely the impact of the intervention programmes so you are aware of which programmes are the most successful at accelerating pupils' progress.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The safeguarding team is highly knowledgeable about how to keep pupils safe. They work with a wide range of agencies to ensure that the most appropriate support is put in place for pupils and their families. These external agencies include school nurses, doctors, social care and an early help consultant from the local authority.

The school's safeguarding team takes a lead at early help meetings to try and implement the support as quickly as possible. The team challenges other professionals if they feel decisions taken are not in the best interest of the pupils and their families. The school has their own early help worker to ensure that all families will receive some offer of support as appropriate.

The pupils' voice is always at the centre of decisions made. The safeguarding team use symbols to help those pupils who find communication difficult to express their views prior to multi-agency meetings. The school has made it easier for pupils to identify the safeguarding team by attaching purple pom-poms to the team's

lanyards and to safeguarding posters around the school. All pupils who were spoken with during the inspection said they felt safe and could name adults who they can go to if they are worried about something.

Safeguarding records are detailed and of high quality. The procedures for the administration of medicines are rigorous. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

## **Inspection findings**

- Teachers successfully tailor the curriculum to meet pupils' individual needs. This enables the pupils to make outstanding progress over time. Pupils who have severe and complex learning needs and sensory and/or physical needs, benefit greatly from the multi-sensory curriculum. In one class, pupils were completing tasks based on their topic of the seaside. Adults provided pupils with sunscreen so they could smell the coconut lotion. Sound was used to encourage pupils to identify waves crashing. Pupils' evident progress enabled them to meet their personalised targets. For some pupils, the targets assessed focused on eye-gaze choosing, listening and attention and response to stimulation. The safe exploration of resources enabled pupils to make strong progress.
- Pupils who have sensory and/or physical needs also benefit from a range of therapies. These include PAT dog and rebound therapy. The rebound therapy tones the pupils' muscles to support them to access movement and exercise. The therapies are planned using the expertise of external services. The pupils' outcomes in their education, health and care plans are broken down into smaller targets within their individual educational plans. The targets are reviewed weekly to ensure that they are challenging enough. Although leaders review pupils' progress at set times during the year, they do not review the impact of each therapy. Therefore, leaders do not know which therapies have had the most impact to promote pupils' learning and development.
- The school is focused on ensuring that pupils have the skills and knowledge to lead fulfilled lives after they have finished school. The careers education is excellent. You organise career days and evenings where colleges and other providers come to the school to advertise a range of courses. All pupils have the opportunity to complete work experience. For some pupils, this has involved working in the local community in garden centres and coffee shops. For those pupils who are not yet ready to work in the community, jobs are created within the school. All pupils have to attend an interview for their roles and are given feedback afterwards. Each pupil has a workplace profile to record what they have done. Parents also contribute to the profiles. One parent commented that their child had been so motivated by work, they were packing their work bag on Friday evening in preparation for the following Monday morning.
- In the sixth form, students choose from two pathways at present, horticulture and hospitality. Both these routes provide students with an excellent opportunity to work in teams and to meet members of the public. The horticultural group work with the local residential home to develop their garden. Students planted carrot seeds, discussing conditions required for their growth. They explained that

they would eventually taste the carrots and then sell them on. The students were motivated because the task was purposeful.

- The hospitality group bake delicious cakes to sell in the café, based in Grantham, two days a week. Students gain in confidence, inviting members of the public into the café and serving them. They work well in teams and thoroughly enjoy the experience. The students are also motivated when former students come back to the café and explain how they have a job, live independently and are living fulfilled lives. All students who left the school last year secured a place in employment or at college, or are living independently.
- Teachers have high expectations for their pupils and, as a result, the pupils are engaged and motivated. For example, in the key stage 4 class, the teacher asked the pupils to explain what 'humidity' means to help them describe the conditions inside the incubator for hatching eggs. The pupils were then challenged by further questions of how they could change the temperature. Pupils' work is neatly presented and clearly shows outstanding progress in their learning.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- intervention programmes are evaluated to know which are the most effective for promoting pupils' 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 Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Martin Finch

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection we met with you, the assistant headteacher, the safeguarding team, the middle leaders responsible for interventions, communication and the curriculum, and members of the teaching and non-teaching staff. We observed the pupils on arrival, met some parents, visited all the classes that were in school, spoke to pupils, and looked at pupils' current work and compared it to the targets in their education, health and care plans. We studied your school development plan, your self-evaluation, and the minutes of the local governing body meetings. We reviewed records about attendance and safeguarding. We considered the views of parents we spoke with and the four responses to the Ofsted free-text service. We also considered the 18 responses to the staff survey.