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Mr Steven Barnes
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Barnes

Short inspection of The Pilgrim School

Following my visit to the school on 1 February 2018 with Liz Moore, Ofsted Inspector, and Jason Brooks, 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and the leadership team have created a very warm and caring environment in which pupils develop resilience and make good improvements to their emotional and mental health well-being. The staff are very well trained to help meet pupils' needs and develop very positive relationships with them, and their parents and carers. One parent commented, 'My daughter has grown in confidence and is blossoming into a more confident young woman as a result of the care and support of the school. Her grades have vastly improved with the considerate, kind and knowledgeable staff.'

The majority of pupils are dual registered with their mainstream school, although an increasing proportion are registering solely with the school due to their needs. Before pupils start attending this school, the reintegration and support officers visit the pupils at home with their parents and gain detailed and valuable information about the pupils' needs. This is shared with teachers to ensure that a curriculum is designed to meet both the emotional and academic needs of the pupils. The school has high aspirations for all pupils and encourages them to study GCSEs, BTEC first qualifications and functional skills, to ensure that they are well prepared for their next stage of education.

At the time of the previous inspection, the inspectors asked you to use information about pupils' prior attainment to match learning tasks to pupils' levels of ability. In the current academic year, you have changed how you assess pupils' ability on

entry in order to give you a more accurate picture of what pupils can do and what they do not know. Teachers use this information to plan work to meet pupils' needs and to set targets for further improvements. Pupils are aware of these targets, among which there is often a focus to improve their spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Inspectors also asked you to raise the achievements of those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. This group of pupils now make good progress from their starting points. The coordinator for the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities devises passports for pupils. These detail pupils' learning needs, closely following the objectives set out in the pupils' education, health and care plans. Specific learning targets are set and regularly checked to ensure that a pupil is on track to meet these targets. This group of pupils have made good progress and achieved well in English in 2017. However, progress in mathematics has not been as strong. The school has recently purchased an intervention programme to support those pupils who find mathematics more difficult. It is too early to judge the impact of this programme.

Finally, inspectors asked that subject leaders regularly check the quality of teaching. Subject leaders for English and mathematics have opportunities to check the quality of teaching across all four sites. They monitor pupils' work, and liaise with colleagues externally to moderate pupils' work. The mathematics coordinator is aware that pupils need to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills in order to accelerate pupils' progress.

Following this inspection, I have asked you to ensure that the school development plan has measureable success criteria by which the governors can judge if actions taken have been successful or not.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's safeguarding procedures are comprehensive. Many pupils who are admitted to the school have high anxiety levels, which present a barrier to their emotional well-being. The pastoral staff devise a 'stay safe' plan for each pupil, using the information they have gleaned from the assessments on pupils' entry. The plans identify possible triggers which can cause a pupil to become distressed and measures of how to resolve these situations. Pupils who are at risk of self-harm have a support plan. The school has resources to support pupils at school and directs them to a helpline if they are struggling when at home. School staff work very closely with the children and mental health service (CAMHS) to provide appropriate support.

As part of the curriculum, pupils learn how to be resilient. Staff believe that educational resilience will support pupils in their preparation for their future lives. In lessons, pupils learn how to be more resilient and learn about their well-being. One pupil wrote, 'Stress is a normal physical response to events that make you feel threatened or upset your balance in some way.' The vast majority of pupils who responded to the pupils' survey or spoke to inspectors said the school helps them to

look after their emotional and mental health.

The induction for new staff is rigorous. All staff are informed of the school's policies and procedures. Staff are made aware of the needs of pupils so they are fully aware of the challenges that pupils face. All staff who responded to the staff survey said that pupils are safe. The designated leads for safeguarding record all concerns in detail and they work closely with a range of external agencies to follow up concerns. If staff are unhappy with the response of a service, they will escalate the concern until they receive a satisfactory conclusion. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose.

The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is decreasing. Staff are very creative in designing bespoke education packages to overcome pupils' anxieties and to encourage them to attend school regularly. The proportion of pupils who have been excluded has fallen after an increase in the previous summer. Staff revisited the school's behaviour policy, made changes and, as a result, behaviour has improved.

Inspection findings

- On this inspection, my colleagues and I looked at how well pupils' are making progress in English and mathematics, how effective leadership is in raising standards and how well the curriculum has been designed to meet the pupils' needs.
- The headteacher and the senior leadership team are passionate about improving the pupils' emotional health, as well as ensuring that they achieve academically. The governors are very knowledgeable about the school's improvement and regularly check on the progress the school is making. The communication between pastoral staff and teachers is excellent.
- The school is a tolerant and caring place where pupils settle and make good progress. Leaders regularly check the pupils' emotional development and academic progress. If pupils' emotional well-being has deteriorated, or academic progress is weak, action is taken quickly to improve pupils' outcomes. However, leaders' action planning does not have measureable success criteria by which governors can judge if actions taken by leaders have been successful. For example, it is not clear how the impact of the new interventions to accelerate pupils' progress will be measured to show if the intervention has been successful.
- The curriculum has been tailored to meet the needs of all pupils, which enables them to make good progress overall. Pupils study a range of subjects and achieve well. The standard achieved in art is high. Pupils have a good understanding of British values. A freedom trail around Lincoln enabled pupils to learn about equal rights for women and transgender people. Teachers plan visits to the theatre, and more recently to London, to help pupils learn about the world around them and to build their confidence and self-esteem by going to new places.
- Pupils are developing into fluent and accurate readers. They read independently texts of good quality. The pupils' comprehension skills are enhanced by teachers'

strong subject knowledge. Pupils in Year 11 were extremely studious and articulate when discussing the poem 'Exposure' by Wilfred Owen. They were interpreting the poet's feelings well. For example, responding to the line, 'All their eyes [soldiers] are ice', pupils discussed what this could mean. One pupil thought that the eyes may be fixated on the enemy and that was why they were 'frozen'. Pupils also make good progress with their writing skills and achieve well from their starting points.

- Teachers plan work to address areas of weakness. However, leaders have become aware that teaching also needs to challenge pupils on making further progress, as well as correcting misconceptions. The leader of mathematics has observed teaching and provided support where it is weaker. Support for the less able has been developed recently. However, not all pupils have enough opportunities to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills to achieve higher standards. Their attainment in mathematics is lower than in English at the end of key stage 4.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school development plan has clear measureable success criteria by which governors can judge if actions taken have been successful or not
- the quality of teaching in mathematics improves to enable more pupils to attain a strong GCSE pass or higher at the end of key stage 4.

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, the inspection team met with you, the deputy headteacher, the leader of teaching and the leader of pastoral care. We also met the coordinators of English and mathematics and two teachers. We observed learning at all four sites and looked at pupils' work in books. I met with three governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. Inspectors listened to pupils read and spoke with pupils. You and I reviewed records about keeping children safe. We studied your school development plan and the self-evaluation. Inspectors also considered the six responses to the Ofsted free-text service from parents and we spoke with three parents on the telephone. We also considered the 27 responses to the staff survey and the 13 responses to the pupils' survey.