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10 February 2016

Mrs Carol Argent
Headteacher
The Livity School
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Dear Mrs Argent

Short inspection of The Livity School

Following my visit to the school on 19 January with Kanwaljit Singh, 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 January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Leaders and governors have successfully managed a significant number of changes since the time of the last inspection. These have included moving the school to a new building on a different site, your appointment as headteacher on a permanent basis and a review of the school's governance arrangements. You have ensured that all staff, pupils and parents have been actively involved in many of these changes. As a result, everyone is working together to move the school forward and make further improvements.

The school provides very effective support for pupils who have complex special educational needs and disabilities. Many have significant health needs which are managed well to allow them to access their learning successfully. Teachers, teaching assistants and other professionals work as a close team to ensure that all pupils' needs are met. The new school building provides a stimulating and accessible environment that encourages pupils to achieve as much as they can. Staff are constantly reviewing and adapting how they teach a wide range of subjects and enrichment activities to make full use of the impressive new facilities. They ensure learning activities make sense for pupils and provide opportunities for them to apply their skills and understanding in different ways and places. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning and develop positive relationships with staff.

The areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report have been addressed. Progress information is now used to plan appropriate learning activities that take account of individual needs and starting points. Teachers make sure that pupils' starting points are accurately assessed when they start at the school. They work with school colleagues and their peers in other schools to check that their evaluations are correct and identify the next steps to be made. Teachers make sure that all progress is captured, recorded and built on. They share this information with health professionals and therapists so that any learning can be constantly reinforced. They ensure that assessments reflect the full needs of their pupils. For example, the school has developed its own assessment model for measuring progress across all of the early years areas of learning. Leaders use this detailed progress tracking information to check how well individuals and groups are doing. They correctly identified that pupils were not making the same amount of progress in English as they were in mathematics because communication systems needed to be improved. This resulted in a review of communication strategies throughout the school. Current progress information indicates that English standards have started to rise again as a result of the improvements made.

Although leadership roles and responsibilities were reviewed and actions taken following the last inspection, the capacity of senior leaders has been stretched due to further changes in post holders and periods of maternity leave. Leaders have managed this well by considering what responsibilities could be devolved to middle leaders. New or less experienced postholders have been supported to allow them to monitor the quality of teaching and learning effectively. This has allowed standards to be maintained. Leaders and governors have also planned for the succession of future leaders within the school to minimise any recruitment issues in the future. The governing body has reviewed how it can work more effectively to provide stronger strategic support to leaders. A new Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed and an audit of members' professional skills undertaken. Governors receive detailed reports from leaders and can demonstrate that they have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They have been less proactive in ensuring that statutory policies and other required information are regularly reviewed and published on the school's website. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and improvements are carefully planned. However, it is not clear how governors will monitor the impact of improvements or check that they are happening quickly enough.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding considerations underpin everything that the school does. Staff ensure that pupils receive high levels of care to enable them to benefit from a wide range of teaching and learning activities. Therapies are carefully planned and conducted safely, using the high-quality facilities and resources available. Staff are mindful of pupils' personal dignity and take account of their preferences whenever possible. Pupils are kept safe but are encouraged to be as independent as possible, for example when moving around the building. Safeguarding procedures are regularly reviewed to check they are effective. However, policies have not always been

updated to take account of the latest guidance and reflect the good practice seen at the school. Training in safer recruitment practices has been completed and the required staff employment checks carried out. Child protection roles and responsibilities are known and understood by everyone. Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding responsibilities have been appropriately covered when key post holders have been absent. This has included providing training to all staff to update their understanding of the latest statutory guidance. Staff know all pupils and their families very well and work closely with other professionals to ensure they are well supported.

Leaders are aware that attendance rates overall are low compared to other schools. Systems for monitoring this are robust and appropriate strategies are in place to address the need for regular attendance with parents. Some pupils are not able to attend regularly due to their identified health needs and planned medical interventions. However, a few extremely vulnerable pupils have not attended school for a considerable length of time and no alternative arrangements for their education have been made. The school has made every effort to work collaboratively with key workers from a wide range of agencies, to address the needs of these pupils and their families. However, support provided by other responsible bodies has not been sufficient to ensure that all statutory obligations are being met. Some pupils have not received an appropriate education for an unacceptable length of time.

Inspection findings

- The school is a calm and creative place to learn. Staff celebrate what pupils can do, rather than worry about what they cannot achieve. There is an appropriate focus on teaching and learning and pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum. This takes account of their additional needs without limiting their access to a wide range of enjoyable learning activities.
- All adults work together as a team to model the attitudes and behaviours they wish to see adopted. They share high aspirations for all pupils and are quick to recognise success and move learning on. As a result, most pupils make at least the expected amount of progress in all areas of learning.
- Learning activities are carefully planned to take account of different levels of understanding or skill. While most pupils achieve well from their starting points, the most-able pupils are sometimes not challenged to make as much progress as they could.
- Teaching staff benefit from a carefully considered programme of professional development opportunities. They draw on the support of senior and middle leaders to ensure they can carry out their responsibilities effectively. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to learning and link closely with teachers to plan the next steps.
- Work to consult and support parents is effective. Parents appreciate the support the school offers and the care staff take of their children. They receive frequent updates on how well their child is doing and how learning can be supported at home. A family support worker ensures that parents are able to access helpful

advice and guidance as they need it. The parent council is currently working with school leaders to ensure all parents appreciate the need for regular attendance.

- Effective systems for communicating, using pictures, symbols and signs, have been established. Pupils are able to express their views and preferences in a manner that suits them best. Staff model strategies in a consistent way and effective communication skills are constantly reinforced throughout the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- other professionals and agencies continue to be held strongly to account for providing appropriate support and ensuring all statutory obligations are met, when pupils are at risk or missing from education
- plans for monitoring improvements include specific responsibilities and timescales, to allow them to check that actions have been completed successfully and in a timely manner.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Lambeth. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Cox

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders. Inspectors met with a group of teachers, a group of support staff and a group of therapists. Some governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, met with an inspector. A representative of the local authority was also spoken to. Inspectors met with some parents and evaluated the school's own parental surveys. Short visits to all classes were made, accompanied by senior leaders. A range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, pupils' progress information and evidence of safeguarding arrangements, was reviewed.