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14 March 2019

Mr Daran Bland  
Executive Headteacher  
The Garth School  
Pinchbeck Road  
Spalding  
Lincolnshire  
PE11 1QF

Dear Mr Bland,

### **Short inspection of The Garth School**

Following my visit to the school on 12 February 2019 with Karen Brown, 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 predecessor school was judged to be outstanding in June 2015.

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

School leaders have maintained the outstanding standard of education. Pupils very much enjoy attending the school. They learn well, their views are listened to and they appreciate the high-quality care and guidance they receive. You have created a positive and stimulating curriculum, which is personalised to meet the needs of individual pupils. Staff carefully plan pupils' learning and provide effective support. This ensures that pupils make outstanding progress from their starting points. Parents and carers who responded to the school's surveys are happy with the care and education that their children receive.

Pupils develop their skills through well-thought-out activities and communication aids. Staff create wonderful learning experiences that support pupils to develop their personal and communication skills well. The 'daily circuits' give pupils a stimulating start to their day. They successfully enhance pupils' physical development, self-confidence and love of their learning.

Staff effectively attend to pupils' medical needs. Pupils have access to a range of specialists to support their personal development, for example individual help with speech, mobility and communication. Inspectors observed pupils showing their improved communication by using sign language when in conversation with the head of the school. They were able to explain in detail how they had improved as a result of close staff support.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified that leaders should further develop community links, in order to strengthen vocational opportunities available to pupils

in key stages 4 and 5. They also recommended that the range of courses that can be formally accredited be expanded. In response, leaders now ensure that pupils contribute positively in their local community. Some pupils attend another school within the trust to study for more formal qualifications. Parents appreciate the hard work and effort of the staff in making this happen. Pupils are now better prepared for the next stage in their learning and are rightly proud of their achievements.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

School leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders promote an impeccable safeguarding culture within the school. The roles and responsibilities of staff are outlined in the school's policy, are on display in school and are thoroughly understood. Staff are extremely knowledgeable about the process of reporting a safeguarding concern. Training is effective and up to date. If a concern is raised, leaders take prompt action and keep a detailed log of events. The governing body and personnel from the multi-academy trust make regular checks to ensure that safeguarding is at the heart of the school's work.

Leaders ensure that pupils and families receive the most appropriate support. The family-liaison officer successfully develops productive relationships with families. She provides regular and effective help, linking well with external agencies. Pupils' attendance is tracked closely and is above the national average for special schools. During the current academic year, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has fallen.

Procedures for the recruitment of staff are secure. All the required checks on adults who work in the school have been completed.

### **Inspection findings**

- Curriculum design and implementation is effective and provides pupils with a bespoke offer closely linked to their education, health and care plans. Pupils make outstanding progress.
- Leaders are conscientious in their ongoing assessment of pupils' progress. 'Learning journals' are impressive. They enable staff to capture the steps of success taken by each individual and then to precisely plan the rest of their learning journey. Leaders ensure that pupils receive effective feedback from their teachers so that they improve and have every opportunity to succeed.
- The head of school is viewed as an excellent role model. She has ensured that high-quality professional development opportunities are available to all staff including leaders. Staff are reflective practitioners. They have high aspirations for themselves and pupils. They are ambitious for all to succeed.
- Governance is a strength. School development priorities and plans are well known by the knowledgeable governing body. They pay close attention to pupils' safety, welfare, progress and outcomes. They have the skills and expertise to hold leaders closely to account and to ensure that all pupils achieve and progress well, regardless of their starting points or disadvantage.

- Leaders tenaciously quality assure teaching. They ensure that school policies and procedures are accurately applied. Teachers have ongoing discussions with their peers and with leaders about how best to support pupils' learning and progress. Constant evaluation takes place to ensure that the aspirational targets set for pupils to achieve are met or exceeded.
- Support staff are highly skilled and valued members of the school community. They contribute positively to pupils' progress. No examples were seen of inappropriate behaviour. Good, cooperative behaviour was observed throughout the inspection.
- Leaders make excellent use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. Clear strategies are in place to meet the barriers to learning that exists. These plans are regularly evaluated to check they are having maximum impact on pupils' progress. The progress of disadvantaged pupils is as strong as their peers.
- Staff said that they enjoy working in the school and feel valued. They appreciate the skilful and passionate way in which leaders model outstanding practice across the school. Staff turnover is low and is a healthy indication that the staff feel positive about their contribution to the school's work and to pupils' lives.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue their excellent work to further develop assessment frameworks to reflect the full range learners' needs.

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 County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jason Brooks  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, the executive headteacher, the head of school, the assistant headteacher and middle leaders. Inspectors held meetings with small groups of teachers and support staff. They observed learning throughout the school with leaders, reviewed pupils' work and spoke with pupils. Inspectors met with the chief executive officer of the Community Inclusive Trust. The chair of the governing body was also spoken with. The lead inspector, along with the head of school, checked records and reviewed procedures for keeping children safe. Together they studied the school development planning and self-evaluation. The lead inspector considered the views of parents who replied to the school's own parental survey, because there were too few responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, for analysis to take place.