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Mrs Elaine Haver
Principal Head Teacher
The Cavendish High Academy
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Dear Mrs Haver

Short inspection of The Cavendish High Academy

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 2017 with Linda Griffiths, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be outstanding in February 2011.

This school continues to be outstanding.

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

Since you took up post in 2015, you have taken the school from strength to strength. You took time to evaluate the school, making sure you got an accurate picture of both its strengths and relative weaknesses. As time has gone on, you have involved the rest of your team more and more in evaluating the school and planning improvements. This approach has earned you the trust, confidence and respect of your staff and governors.

This is a school where pupils and staff are passionate about learning. Younger pupils relish learning about the world around them and older pupils work hard to gain the qualifications they need for adult life. Staff are studying for an array of relevant professional qualifications. Pupils and staff talked to inspectors about their plans for the future. For many of your pupils, a place at college and a job seem like an unobtainable dream when they join the school. However, at The Cavendish High Academy, you and your staff make these dreams a reality. In addition, staff told me how they had developed their own careers since coming to work at your school. On your team, there are lunchtime assistants who have trained as teaching assistants, teaching assistants who have trained as teachers and teachers who are now qualified school leaders. This is a school where people's dreams become reality.

You and your school are held in high regard by parents, the local authority, external agencies and other schools. Parents clamour to secure places at The Cavendish High Academy for their children. You have made sure that your staff have the skills and expertise to meet the diverse needs of pupils on roll. The local authority appreciates your willingness to play your part in contributing to the local offer for special educational needs. You support other schools locally and are keen to disseminate your excellent practice in supporting pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. In addition, your pupils raise awareness of special educational needs and disabilities through their involvement in the National Youth Parliament, including by giving talks to primary school pupils and speaking at regional and national conferences.

You recognise the importance of succession planning to ensure that your ambitious plans are sustained. You encourage staff to gain recognised leadership qualifications. Moreover, you make sure that your staff each have responsibility for an aspect of the school's work. Your staff relish this chance to play their part in the school's success.

You and your staff involve yourselves in academic research. You recognise the value of working with academics who are leaders in their fields. Your pupils reap the benefits of the school's engagement in research projects such as 'Rhythm for Reading'. You encourage your staff to be professionally inquisitive. You make sure that your teachers keep up to date with developments in education through frequent 'professional dialogue days'. Consequently, The Cavendish High Academy is an exciting place to be, whether as a pupil or member of staff.

At the inspection of your predecessor school, the inspectors asked you to continue to develop the existing good provision for pupils who have autistic spectrum disorders. You have built a specialist team to work with this group of pupils. This team has expanded the range of provision offered for these pupils. Although some of these pupils are taught in classes with their peers, the school offers personalised programmes for other pupils. You have made sure that the staff who work with these pupils receive the highly specialist training needed to do their jobs well. As a result, the provision for these pupils has improved since the previous inspection.

Inspectors also asked you to consolidate the extended accreditation for most able pupils. You have kept up to date with recent changes in the curriculum and qualifications. You have revised your curriculum to make sure that it reflects the requirements of the new national curriculum as well as changes to qualifications and the differing needs of your current cohorts. Staff have given careful consideration to the qualifications you offer. Your pupils, regardless of ability, gain high-value qualifications which stand them in good stead for their next steps. Almost all pupils in recent years have moved on successfully to further education or employment.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders make sure that systems and procedures are rigorous and robust. The school carries out thorough checks on all staff before they are appointed to make sure that they are suitable to work with children. All staff undertake frequent

training so that they understand their roles and responsibilities. Staff know their pupils well and go to great lengths to make sure that pupils are kept safe both at school and in the community.

Staff have adapted the school's comprehensive safeguarding policy for both parents and pupils so that everyone knows what to do. You are confident that the team in charge of safeguarding responds immediately to any concerns that are raised. The school carries out thorough checks on all staff before they are appointed to make sure that they are suitable to work with children. Staff and parents agree that pupils are safe and well cared for.

Inspection findings

- Pupils enjoy coming to school. The overwhelming majority of pupils are in school on time every day. School staff follow up assiduously on any pupil absence. If any pupil is absent without good reason, the school attendance officer makes a home visit. The school is quick to help any parents who are struggling to get their children to school.
- Leaders ensure that the school makes good use of pupil premium funding. Disadvantaged pupils make strong progress across the school so that they keep up with their peers. Leaders make sure that they consult with class teachers to find out what would make the most difference to these pupils. You have delegated responsibility for the school's pupil premium strategy to one of the assistant headteachers. He has put a credible plan in place to make further improvements to raise achievement for these pupils.
- Your pupils take part in a wide range of trips and visits throughout their time at your school. Staff are ambitious in selecting and planning these events. They have overcome all the obstacles in their way to arrange a trip to a European theme park for a group of pupils, many of whom have not been on holiday before.
- You and your staff are not afraid to make changes when you see that things are not as effective as you would like. You have used evidence-based research recently from neuroscience to improve outcomes for pupils. You have launched a thematic curriculum which succeeds in meeting the wide-ranging needs of your pupils. You and your staff have reorganised teaching so that pupils spend most of their time in one class with the same teacher. Your own assessment and tracking data evidences the positive difference these changes have made.
- Many of your pupils have exhibited challenging behaviour in their previous schools and also in their early days at your school. Your staff are highly skilled at helping pupils to better manage their behaviour so that they quickly conform to the high standards you set at The Cavendish High Academy. Pupils listen attentively to their teachers and classmates; they respond quickly to instructions and take pride in their work. At lunchtime, pupils queue patiently to be served and chat happily to their friends.
- Your staff manage pupils' transitions between school, home and college exceptionally well. They make sure that they help new pupils quickly settle into the school. Daily communication between home and school makes sure that parents are well informed about how their children are getting on. Older pupils

are supported to make carefully considered choices about whether they move on to college or employment. Staff make sure that parents and pupils are well prepared to deal with the challenges they may face when pupils leave school.

- Governors are passionate about their school. Despite facing some challenges along the way, they were unwavering in their determination to appoint the best possible person as their new headteacher. Governors have risen to the challenge of running an academy, not shying away from some difficult decisions, but know that there is more they need to do. They have made some progress in recruiting governors with the specialist skills and expertise required, but gaps still remain. Governors acknowledge that they rely heavily on the headteacher to do some of the governing body's and board's work. They recognise that they must step up to the mark as members and trustees so that the headteacher can focus fully on her own responsibilities.

Next steps for the school

Those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they have the skills, experience and expertise to provide the highly effective, strategic leadership required to maintain the school's outstanding provision.

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

Yours sincerely

Pippa Jackson Maitland
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we met with you, your senior teachers, teaching staff and support staff. An inspector met two members of the governing body, including the chair. We also spoke with representatives of the local authority, the school improvement partner and specialist staff who support pupils at the school. Inspectors considered the five responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. An inspector met formally with a group of staff and considered the six responses to Ofsted's online survey of staff. Inspectors spoke to pupils during lessons and at breaktimes. We visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning with senior leaders. We looked at information about pupils' progress and attainment and the school's self-evaluation and action plans. We conducted a full review of safeguarding, including an evaluation of the school's procedures and policies to keep pupils safe, training records, recruitment checks and record-keeping.