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Mrs Allison Collinge
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Collinge

Short inspection of Golden Hill Pupil Referral Unit

Following my visit to the school on 11 May 2017 with Bernard Robinson, 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 September 2012.

This school continues to be outstanding.

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

Since the previous inspection, a new chair and several new members have been appointed to the members committee. The number of pupils on the school's roll has increased to 40. Temporarily, the school has a high proportion of pupils in the school with education, health and care plans who are waiting for places to be made available in specialist provision. It is anticipated that these pupils will have moved on by September 2017.

Your school is a haven for pupils and their families. Typically, pupils have experienced failure in their previous schools, so when they join your school, they have a negative view of themselves and of education. Within a short space of time, you and your colleagues transform these pupils into happy, confident, engaged learners. Your school is a welcoming, calm and orderly place where pupils can flourish.

Your school is held in high regard by the local authority and local primary schools. Local headteachers appreciate the positive difference you make to their most challenging pupils. Your team's support to these pupils and their teachers has helped reduce the number of pupils who have been permanently excluded from local schools. The local authority applauds the key role you play in identifying and

assessing the needs of pupils who will require additional resources to help them to be successful. Recently, you have extended your provision for these pupils while the local authority sources more specialist school places. You and your team are adapting your short-stay provision to meet the needs of these longer-stay pupils. Local authority officers and members agree this must be temporary, so you can continue with your excellent preventative work with pupils who are at risk of exclusion.

At the last inspection, inspectors asked leaders to further define the role of subject leaders. Since the inspection, leadership has been distributed more widely across the school. Senior leaders and middle leaders now have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. You re-organised subject leadership, so that staff with the interest and expertise were appointed to lead each subject. For example, the science lead has transformed the teaching of science. Pupils talked enthusiastically about the increased opportunities for 'hands on' learning. Staff, particularly those in the early stages of their careers, feel well supported by the English, mathematics and other lead teachers.

Subject leaders constantly review the curriculum offer. You make sure that your curriculum is a carefully considered balance of academic and personal and social learning to help pupils re-integrate successfully to their mainstream schools. Subject leaders keep a close eye on curriculum coverage across the classes and make sure that teachers evaluate pupils' progress.

Inspectors also asked you to design and implement new systems for assessment that focus teachers' attention on even smaller steps of achievement by pupils. Since the last inspection, the school has implemented different approaches to assessment with varying degrees of success. The current system works better for pupils who make smaller steps in their learning. Leaders and teachers are frustrated by the limitations of the current system for the majority of pupils who make strong progress during their time at the school. You have made sure you have tracked these pupils' progress carefully and planned next steps in learning using your current system. However, you have well-developed plans for September 2017, when you will move to the local authority assessment tool, which is used by mainstream primary schools in your local cluster. You are confident this tool will not only provide the information you need about pupils' learning, but also facilitate the transfer of pupils' information between schools. You have secured support from the local authority as well as expertise from local schools to help you put this in place.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are thorough. The school carries out robust checks on all staff before they take up post, to check they are suitable to work with children. Staff attend regular training to keep their knowledge up to date. Leaders ensure that any concerns are followed up rigorously. The school's strong partnerships with external agencies help pupils and families access any additional support needed. Staff are highly vigilant. They make sure that any emerging issues, for example name-calling, are nipped in the bud. Staff and

pupils agree that pupils are safe and well cared for.

Inspection findings

- Staff enjoy working at the school. As one member of staff said, 'This is the best job in the world.' They feel valued and supported by senior leaders. You make sure that new teachers receive high-quality support and training. You listen to your colleagues and encourage them to try out their ideas. However, leaders do not shy away from challenging colleagues to make sure that everyone achieves the high standards the school expects.
- The new members are helping the members committee to improve the school further. The dynamic headteachers who have joined the committee use their skills and expertise to support and challenge the school. Members have high expectations of the school, its staff and pupils. They have a deep understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and waste no time in making improvements where required.
- Pupils make strong progress during their time at the school. They develop positive attitudes to learning quickly. Pupils' work testifies to the significant gains they make in English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils conform to the consistently high standards set by staff. They listen carefully to their teachers, follow instructions promptly and take pride in their work. Pupils show respect for adults and their peers. Teachers make sure that any incidents of poor behaviour are used as a learning opportunity. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour choices and think about what they might do better the next time.
- Pupils enjoy school. One parent told inspectors how her child 'cannot get out of the door fast enough' when the taxi arrives in the morning. The overwhelming majority of your pupils have excellent attendance. In their previous schools, many of your pupils spent time out of lessons because of their challenging behaviour. When they come to Golden Hill, pupils conform to your expectations very quickly, so that they are in every lesson, every day.
- Golden Hill gives pupils a second chance. Almost all of your pupils move on successfully to either mainstream or special schools. A headteacher who spoke to inspectors testified to how well you prepare pupils for this move. It is a credit to your school's success that so many headteachers wanted to talk to inspectors about your successful work.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should build on their existing expertise to implement the school's planned developments in assessment successfully.

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

Yours sincerely

Pippa Jackson Maitland
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- Inspectors met with senior leaders, middle leaders, teaching and support staff. An inspector met with the chair and a member of the members committee.
- Inspectors also spoke to two representatives of the local authority.
- Two parents responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. An inspector met with three parents.
- An inspector met formally with a group of staff and considered the 16 responses to Ofsted's online survey of staff.
- There were no responses from pupils to Ofsted's online survey, so inspectors spoke formally to a group of pupils as well as informally to pupils during the school day. Inspectors also considered the school's recent pupil survey results.
- Inspectors visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning. We made visits to classrooms and conducted a work scrutiny with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at information about pupils' progress and attainment, the school's self-evaluation and action plan as well as a range of other documentation.
- Inspectors conducted a full review of safeguarding, including an evaluation of the school's policies and procedures to keep pupils safe, training records, recruitment checks and record-keeping.