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Mr Andrew Taylor  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Taylor

### **Short inspection of Longford Park School**

Following my visit to the school on 6 March 2018 with Doreen Davenport, 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 December 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are an inspiring school leader whose approach is based upon your strong belief in the power of offering an excellent education, coupled with your unstinting belief in children. You are ably assisted by your assured, enthusiastic leadership team. Together you ensure high expectations and lead by example. There is a strong sense of moving forward and never standing still in your school. This has resulted in improvement going from strength to strength.

There is a shared sense of passion for ensuring that your pupils receive the very best education. This is guided by your poignant school values: 'Believe', 'Belong' and 'Become'. You have created an environment of care and nurture that radiates through the whole school community. Together with staff, pupils, parents and carers, you are justifiably proud of being part of Longford Park. You break down barriers to learning, ensuring that pupils feel safe and confident to flourish, both academically and in their personal development. This is as a result of excellent teaching and outstanding outcomes.

The overwhelming majority of parents who spoke to inspectors, or responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, are very positive about the school and 'wouldn't want their child to go anywhere else'. Parents say that their children are happy and have 'come on in leaps and bounds'. Many described the school as 'amazing' and said that communication is 'brilliant'. Parents also say that staff are

'approachable and caring' and 'go out of their way' to meet their child's needs. The vast majority of staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire enjoy being part of the team at Longford Park. They consider that the school is extremely well led and managed. Staff share your aspirations for pupils and wholeheartedly endorse the calm, orderly and loving culture that has been created. There is a strong sense of the staff team working collaboratively to achieve the very best for pupils.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified a need to improve pupils' achievement further by developing their independent enquiry skills and use of technology in the classroom. The greater focus on encouraging pupils to work independently is evident in pupils' books. It is clear that pupils regularly get time to think about their learning and practise skills on their own or with their peers. For example, science lessons are based around finding out for themselves. A question is regularly posed at the start of a lesson and pupils are encouraged to use their knowledge, skills and curiosity to explore and come up with their own ideas and next steps. In mathematics, leaders have developed an approach to supporting pupils who are sometimes anxious about getting a calculation wrong, to feel comfortable thinking more deeply about what they are learning and being confident to solve mathematical problems. All pupils have opportunities to use technology in the classroom to support them in their learning. They use laptops and computers to write stories, complete research and practise skills such as mental recall and multiplication tables. Pupils and parents both enjoy the online 'reading bug club', which is an opportunity to read their favourite books electronically. You have tackled the areas of development identified with enthusiasm and success. As a result, pupils' academic progress continues to thrive.

Transition at the different stages of a pupil's school career is comprehensive and thorough. It is personalised to the needs of the pupil and family and conducted with care and sensitivity. The liaison with the receiving schools is excellent and support is given by the outreach team as needed to ensure that pupils settle quickly. Pupils and parents are encouraged to talk about their hopes and anxieties, so that by the time they move to their new school, they are excited and ready to go. Longford Park accelerates the progress of pupils and develops their confidence so well that, if appropriate, many are able to return to mainstream schools. Although leaders are able to track the long-term success of pupils when they return to primary schools, they are less able to monitor a pupil's ongoing success at secondary school. I agree with you that this would be a useful insight and a valuable measure of the longer-term accomplishment of both the pupil and Longford Park.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your team have ensured that pupils are in a safe and secure environment by promoting the clear message that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Detailed safeguarding records are rigorously kept and reviewed regularly to ensure that they meet statutory requirements. Appropriate training for staff and governors is undertaken frequently and is up to date. This includes training related to keeping pupils safe from radicalisation and extremism. Your vigilance, and that of your

leadership team, regarding the care and support of vulnerable pupils is of the highest standard. Leaders have extremely effective relationships with external agencies and are instrumental in contributing to the safeguarding of the vulnerable pupils.

Pupils say they feel very safe and well cared for in the school. They feel confident that adults will help them if needed. Pupils talk with knowledge about the ways they can stay safe in a range of situations, including personally and online. The overwhelming majority of parents feel that you and the staff keep children safe and well looked after.

### **Inspection findings**

- One of the areas I wanted to explore with you was how well pupils achieve at Longford Park, and as part of this, understand the effectiveness of your assessment systems. Assessment information is rigorously collected by leaders to track the progress of pupils and ensure that they make as much progress as possible. Individual dips in pupils' progress are picked up quickly and acted upon to ensure that pupils are back on track as soon as possible. The accuracy and consistency of assessment information is regularly checked within school and across the large number of schools that are part of the Teaching Alliance. The school compares itself to both special school and mainstream national standards. Teachers know all pupils extremely well. They use detailed assessments to plan meticulously for each individual pupil's learning needs on a day-to-day basis. As a result, the progress of the vast majority of pupils quickly accelerates from the time they start in the school. They make outstanding progress through key stages 1 and 2, in reading, writing, mathematics and in their personal, social and emotional development. This is confirmed when looking at pupils' books.
- Another area I wanted to explore was whether pupils receive a suitably broad and balanced curriculum. You offer a high-quality curriculum to pupils. It is both motivating and exciting. In addition to English and mathematics, you offer a rich, imaginative and varied learning experience that significantly contributes to developing pupils' personal, social and emotional skills. For example, your belief in the efficacy of the expressive arts in contributing to pupils' self-esteem is distinct. Pupils show visible pride in learning to play an instrument. They gain confidence to explore their feelings through art and in drama discover new ways to approach situations that might make them angry or anxious. As a pupil explained 'Drama gives us a chance to be safe but sort our problems out. We get some ideas to do things differently.'
- Attendance was another line of enquiry. I found it to be a strength. Attendance is currently above national averages compared to both special and mainstream schools. This is because systems for monitoring absence are meticulous and robust. The education welfare officer and person responsible for monitoring attendance work closely together. They provide good-quality liaison between families, the school and professionals who can offer support to those who need it. Good attendance is rewarded and has a high profile in school. There is a small group of pupils who are persistently absent. They are identified quickly and monitored as part of the school's safeguarding and pastoral support. As a result,

the proportion of pupils that are persistently absent has reduced significantly compared to last year.

- Finally, we agreed to identify some of the strengths of the school. One of these is your highly personalised approach to each individual pupil's learning. This starts with gaining a deep understanding of their needs and then wrapping a bespoke curriculum around them. In doing this, you maximise their chance to succeed not just academically but also in breaking down their individual barriers to learning. For example, all pupils benefit enormously from being offered a range of therapeutic sessions to help them tackle their anxieties and learn new coping and resilience skills.
- Another strength is your collaborative work with other schools, both as a teaching school and an outreach service. Your outreach work is highly regarded by primary schools, who consider your support and experience invaluable. As a lead partner in the Teaching Alliance, you offer a wide range of training, networking, research and support. What is impressive is how you use these aspects of school to benefit your pupils, whether it is the strong, trusting relationships you make that ensure that pupils integrate into new school smoothly, the way schools are brought together to check that assessments are consistent and rigorous, or the way you set up research projects that allow your school to be at the cutting edge of educational practice.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- explore ways to monitor the longer-term success of pupils that leave Longford Park to go to secondary schools.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Eastwood  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, inspectors met with you, your assistant headteachers and curriculum leaders. An inspector also met with a person responsible for maintaining safeguarding records. I met with four governors, including the vice-chair of the governing body, and I also met with a representative of the local authority. We spoke on the telephone to schools to discuss the outreach support they receive from you. We also spoke to one of the other leaders of the Teaching Alliance. We visited lessons and scrutinised pupils' work and assessment books. We took account of the four responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the views of seven parents who talked with an inspector at the start of the school day. We took account of the 29 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and spoke with staff during the day. I met with a small group of pupils. We observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. We looked at school documents, including: information about pupils' achievement; the school's self-evaluation; the school improvement plan; behaviour and incident logs; and documents relating to safeguarding.