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Mrs S Holt
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Holt

Short inspection of Oswaldtwistle White Ash school

Following my visit to the school on 6 March 2019 with Adrian Francis, 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 January 2015.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. As acting headteacher, you have stepped up to the challenge to ensure that White Ash school has continued to improve. Leaders have a strong and clear vision. The school motto of 'Together, anything is possible' is tangible throughout the school. Pupils with a range of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) learn together, socialise, play and support each other exceptionally well. They share in each other's success through weekly assemblies attended by parents and governors. The welcoming and friendly atmosphere has created a school where pupils are happy, really enjoy their learning experiences and are thriving.

At the previous inspection, the inspectors asked you to review and strengthen the school's work in pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by refining the school's promotion of British values to enable pupils to play a full role in British society. This has been tackled very well. British values are threaded through all areas of the school. For example, the pupil parliament members are elected by their class. They represent the voice of their peers as well as their school. A head boy and head girl lead the parliament with support from a teacher. There is a strong culture of mutual respect within the school. The mixed-ability classes allow pupils to understand and respect each other's differences. During the inspection, pupils spoke warmly of how they support non-verbal pupils to communicate through sign language.

Leaders and staff have a strong belief that pupils need to experience and be part of their wider community. Staff see no barrier to achieving this and pupils with complex needs as well as other pupils benefit from a wide range of activities. For example, pupils visit restaurants where they can taste food from other cultures. They visit local churches and mosques to meet faith leaders and attend coffee mornings. Through the rich and diverse curriculum, pupils take an active part in their community and learn and demonstrate British values. One parent typified the comments of many:

We are constantly in awe of the amazing and inspired way the teachers and staff meet the needs of all the children in the school. The opportunities for learning both inside and outside the classroom, we feel fit our child's extremely complex needs incredibly well, which is no small feat.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. The safeguarding team knows pupils and families well. The family support worker builds rapport with parents and carers, and parents speak favourably about the support they receive and the positive difference it makes. Because of the good practice within school, the family support worker has been invited by the local authority to be the lead in a local safeguarding hub in order to share this good practice and support other local schools in safeguarding matters.

All staff are vigilant and respond quickly if there are any changes in pupils' behaviour or appearance. Staff training is up to date and is also undertaken by the governing body. The governor with responsibility for safeguarding works closely with the safeguarding team. He visits the school to check that the strong safeguarding culture is maintained as well as to keep abreast of local and national updates.

Parents who spoke to inspectors were overwhelmingly positive about the school and the way staff go above and beyond in their care and support for their children.

Inspection findings

- One of the lines of enquiry I explored with you was the rationale for the new curriculum and the impact this is having. Leaders have developed a curriculum that is relevant and challenging. The key aim is to support pupils to be life-long learners in the community and in the wider world. Underpinning all teaching and learning is the emphasis on fostering pupils' independence and social skills. The school makes full use of the outside spaces to support this independence and exploration of the wider world. Multiple learning spaces have been created so that a number of classes at one time can learn outdoors. One small group of pupils with complex needs was undertaking a treasure hunt in the woods. The teacher's careful and meticulous planning alongside the creative use of resources helped pupils experience the feel of feathers on a toy parrot, and of fairy lights,

which represented treasure. Another group of pupils were finding objects in the playground to match a specific colour card. Pupils excitedly explored their surroundings and were able to match their colours to leaves, painted planters and other objects. These are examples of where leaders have created a curriculum that challenges and inspires pupils and allows them to experience the wider world through community, social and outdoor learning.

- Another line of enquiry looked at the teaching of mathematics. Leaders had identified that progress in mathematics was not as strong as in English and other subjects. The focus across school is now on the four areas of number, shape, space and measure. Pupils learn the topics that are relevant and will support their life-skills. The teaching of mathematics is by standalone lessons as well as being threaded through other subjects and topics. A good example was observed in one class where pupils were making pancakes, using number and measuring skills to weigh flour and measure milk. Pupils also used their reading skills to read out the recipe. The use of 'first', 'then' and 'what next' helped pupils to put a sequence of visual images to the recipe. Once again, meticulous and personalised planning ensured that every pupil was able to take a full part in the learning as well as enjoying the social experience of cooking with their friends. The change in the teaching of mathematics is already having a positive impact, and the school's own assessment data shows that gaps are closing between pupils' progress in mathematics and English. However, this is still in the early stages of development and needs further time to embed so that leaders can be confident that the improvements are having a lasting impact on progress.
- I also looked at pupils' attendance with you. There is a small number of pupils in the school who have considerable medical needs. Some pupils miss extended periods of time in school due to their health needs or attendance at medical appointments, which are out of leaders' control. Leaders have a robust system in place to monitor attendance. Staff work with families to support and maintain good attendance and, as a result, the vast majority of pupils have excellent attendance.
- My final line of enquiry considered the behaviour of pupils and whether it continued to be a strength of the school. Staff know and understand the needs of every pupil extremely well. A number of successful interventions enable pupils to have their sensory, emotional and physical needs met. Leaders have invested in training and professional development so that the staff have the expertise to deliver these interventions. This personalised approach is having a positive and lasting impact on pupils' behaviour for learning. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the positive rewards they receive, including 'star of the day' and 'golden time'. Pupils also appreciate their outdoor classrooms and the many community visits, including those to the beach, shopping and reading stories to a group of local pensioners. The curriculum, careful planning, positive rewards and interventions all work together to meet the needs of every pupil in school and, as a result, behaviour continues to be outstanding.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they develop and embed the refined mathematics curriculum so that pupils make even stronger progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Bather
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, inspectors met with you and senior leaders. They held a meeting with four members of the governing body, including the vice-chair. They met with the safeguarding leads and scrutinised paperwork and safeguarding records, including the record of checks completed on staff. Joint learning walks with leaders were completed and pupils' books and learning records were scrutinised. There were 18 responses to Parent View and inspectors met with nine parents. They took account of the 39 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff, spoke to staff during the day and also met formally with a small group of staff. Inspectors spoke with pupils informally during the day and met formally with seven pupils. They observed behaviour in lessons and around the school. Documents were scrutinised, including information about pupils' progress, the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, records of pupils' attendance and information relating to the work of the governing body.