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Mrs Susan Lucas  
Headteacher  
Hope School  
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Greater Manchester  
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Dear Mrs Lucas

### **Short inspection of Hope School**

Following my visit to the school on 27 September 2018 with Jane Holmes, 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 June 2014.

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

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

Since your appointment in September 2014, you have built upon the school's culture of high expectations and developed a strong sense of teamwork. Your staff and governors share your aim of enabling all pupils to reach their full potential. You have your finger on the pulse of the school. Although the previous inspection did not identify any areas to improve, you have not rested on your laurels. For example, you and your middle leaders have developed a personalised curriculum for pupils from the early years through to post-16.

The school is a happy and harmonious place. The school caters successfully for pupils with severe learning difficulties and profound and complex physical and medical needs. Pupils enjoy coming to school and have a love of learning. Your school has a strong reputation with parents and carers, the local authority and other schools. You, together with your deputy headteacher and staff team, have worked successfully to ensure that pupils continue to benefit from a high-quality education. This is despite the challenges of having to accommodate more pupils over time. Pupils continue to make excellent progress from their different starting points.

Morale is high among staff. You ensure that staff have access to effective ongoing training so that they are highly skilled. Teachers, teaching assistants and therapists work very well together to enable pupils to thrive.

The school is a calm and orderly environment. Pupils are clear about what is expected of them and behave extremely well. Relationships between pupils and staff are strong. Pupils are kind to each other and respond well to instructions. They exhibit excellent attitudes to their learning. The school is a hive of activity. Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities that help them to learn about the world around them. For example, pupils have visited museums and an outdoor residential centre. Pupils enjoy participating in plays, swimming and football. Specialist resources, such as the hydrotherapy pool and sensory areas, allow pupils to develop skills through a variety of activities.

Parents are highly supportive of the work of the school. A typical comment was, 'The school is like part of a family. Staff go above and beyond for the pupils. They have a brilliant rapport with every child.' Another comment included, 'We are delighted with the school. Staff are very approachable. My child is very happy and has made amazing progress.' Every parent who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said that they would recommend the school.

Governors are highly effective and committed to the school. One governor commented, 'We want pupils to achieve as much as possible and be the best that they can be.' Governors reorganised their committee structure to ensure that the decisions they make are in the best interest of the pupils. Governors have a very secure understanding of the school. They use their wide range of skills to challenge and support leaders effectively.

You are reflective and keen for the school to develop further. For example, you are aware that the newly introduced assessment system to monitor and evaluate pupils' progress against the revised curriculum needs to be further embedded.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders ensure that there is an extremely strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. They carry out all checks to make sure adults working with the children are suitable. Staff have received up-to-date safeguarding training. They are particularly aware of looking for changes in the appearance or behaviour of pupils who are unable to communicate verbally. Staff know what to do if they have any concern about a pupil's welfare or safety. Leaders work effectively with different agencies to ensure that pupils are always kept safe.

Pupils feel valued and safe in school. They say that bullying is extremely rare. Pupils learn about staying safe online. They know what to do if they have any concerns. Parents say that their children are safe and well looked after.

### **Inspection findings**

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry, the first of which was attendance. Leaders and staff monitor pupils' attendance carefully and follow up any concerns promptly. Consequently, rates of attendance have improved

over time. Some pupils with medical needs spend intermittent periods of time in hospital. Leaders work closely with families and external agencies to ensure that pupils are well supported and attend school regularly when they are able to do so.

- The second focus for the inspection was the curriculum. You and your leaders have designed a broad, balanced and rich curriculum which caters well for the diverse and complex needs of pupils. You have developed different curriculum 'pathways' based upon pupils' needs and their potential. At the heart of each pathway is a strong focus on pupils' personal development. All pathways support pupils to develop their communication skills and become more independent. They are very well personalised to ensure that they meet the differing needs of all pupils. Pupils are supported effectively as they move through the school. The curriculum ensures that all pupils make progress in the development of their independence and life skills. Staff know pupils very well and teach the curriculum with great skill. They ensure that pupils complete tasks that are closely matched to their individual needs and aim to develop practical skills that will help them in the future. For example, during visits to lessons, pupils were able to follow instructions using symbols or text to work independently and safely to make biscuits as a way of raising money for charity. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well. They learn about British values, including democracy and respect for others. The school's curriculum, and the opportunities it provides, therefore underpins the excellent education provided by the school.
- A third focus looked at how well staff use assessment to improve pupils' learning. Staff set pupils challenging targets which are carefully linked to their education, health and care plans. Leaders have recently introduced an assessment system which aligns closely with the new curriculum pathways developed by leaders. Leaders monitor and evaluate the progress of every pupil against their targets. Consequently, any pupil who falls behind where they should be is quickly identified and helped to catch up. Leaders ensure the accuracy of teachers' assessments by comparing their judgements on pupils' achievements with other colleagues at the school and with a wider group of colleagues from the Greater Manchester Special Schools group. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make exceptional progress from their starting points. However, further work is needed to embed the new assessment system, so that it fully links into the revised curriculum pathways.
- Finally, we considered how well pupils are prepared for life after Hope School. Leaders prepare pupils very well for the next stage of their education and life. Pupils benefit from work experience and careers advice that are carefully planned. For example, pupils play a key role in running 'The Community Cafe'. This enables them to develop their communication and social skills as well as the skills involved in making and pricing the food. Older pupils have the opportunity to visit a local high school and sixth form college to improve their academic, personal and social development. Pupils study for a range of accredited qualifications, including functional skills awards in literacy and numeracy. All pupils go onto education or social care.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- further develop the new assessment system to fully link into the revised curriculum pathways, so leaders can monitor and evaluate the quality of pupils' learning over time even more precisely.

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

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this short inspection we met with you, the deputy headteacher, other senior leaders, middle leaders, and teaching and support staff. I met with three members of the governing body including the chair of the governing body. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. We visited classrooms, jointly with you or your deputy headteacher, to observe pupils' learning. We met with a group of pupils from across the school. We scrutinised pupils' work to evaluate their learning over time. We spoke with parents and took account of 19 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including 19 free-text responses.

We looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation, external reviews and information about pupils' progress. We also evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep children safe; records of training; safeguarding checks and attendance and behaviour information. I also undertook a review of the school's website.