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Mrs Ailsa Moore
Headteacher
Hollybank School
Roe Head
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Dear Mrs Moore

Short inspection of Hollybank School

Following my visit to the school on 17 October 2018 with Tudor 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 the school was judged to be outstanding in 2014.

This school continues to be outstanding.

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

Through your very strong leadership, the school has continued to improve and develop since the last inspection. You are supported well by a deputy headteacher, who is as determined and passionate about providing the best possible experiences for pupils as you are. You have extremely high expectations of staff and, together, you are aspirational for pupils' success. You are now admitting higher numbers of younger pupils. You have met this changing need with a strong sense of purpose. There are already high levels of success, with pupils making substantial progress in a very short time.

The effective way that you work so closely with your healthcare partners enables pupils to enjoy high-quality education and care during their time at Hollybank. Your healthcare team works diligently to ensure that all needs are met to a very high standard. They ensure that they consider all eventualities. They have robust plans in place to tackle any difficulties that occur due to pupils' special needs and/or disabilities.

Staff are highly skilled and committed to ensuring that each pupil can learn and develop to be the best that they can. Teaching is consistently outstanding. Teachers use strong, real-time assessment systems to continually adapt and change planning to meet the needs of pupils. Classroom staff support teachers highly effectively to

deliver plans to an extremely high standard. Positive continual communication ensures that all staff are aware of pupils' targets and the steps that must be taken to support the achievement of the targets.

Governors are passionate about the school. They are dedicated to improving the lives of the pupils and providing them with positive experiences that enhance their learning. Governors regularly and robustly challenge leaders and hold them to account for their actions and decisions.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Parents are confident in the expertise of the staff to prioritise the development of communication and cognition skills. Parents acknowledge the care and support offered to pupils and their families by leaders and staff. One parent stated: 'My child has exceeded all expectations. The school provides an exceptional, safe, nurturing and stimulating learning environment. We are appreciated and respected as parents and included in the supported family ethos.'

Leaders have successfully addressed the area for improvement from the last inspection. They now have exemplary shared, responsive and regular communication with residential staff. This enables pupils to develop further the skills learned at school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Recruitment protocols and procedures are robust. Training for staff ensures that they are fully aware of risks to pupils and the necessity to keep them safe. Records are detailed and precise. Staff understand procedures for reporting concerns.

Leaders and managers have created a safeguarding culture that is evident in all areas of the school. Every member of staff understands the importance of ensuring that vulnerable pupils are safe and well cared for. They ensure that all medical and therapeutic needs are met to a high standard. Individuals with significant additional needs are cared for with sensitivity, understanding and compassion.

Pupils are happy at school. They feel safe and understand that you and your staff care for them. Parents are confident that their children are safe at school. The school is very strong in supporting pupils and their families. You have impeccable communication systems in place for parents.

Inspection findings

- All staff know the pupils very well. They understand the sharp focus that is essential to improve the communication and cognition of pupils.
- Pupils make outstanding progress from their starting points. Assessment systems are highly accurate and offer a bespoke overview of each pupil. Staff record small steps of progress in real time. Teachers use these to change and adapt plans

during lessons. One parent noted that 'lessons are tailored specifically and appropriately to [the child's] needs', and that 'every year we are amazed by her progress. The staff support her consistently to achieve her potential and, as a result, she continues to thrive at this school'.

- Targets are set that reflect those in pupils' education, health and care plans. Staff skilfully break down the long-term targets into smaller, more manageable and easily understandable ones. Staff use a variety of communication devices to enable some pupils to understand their targets. Pupils are then able to work rapidly towards achieving their small step targets. Staff keep meticulous records of progress.
- Staff have extremely high expectations of pupils. The expectations are aspirational but realistic, due to the very high standards in other areas of teaching, learning and assessment. This results in very strong and sustained progress for all pupils.
- Pupils receive highly individualised learning. This supports the strong progress that they make. Teachers use targets to plan learning of knowledge and skills. Carefully structured sessions in the afternoon concentrate on developing and practising these skills.
- Where possible, staff include pupils in valuable self-assessment at the end of lessons. This includes the use of communication devices appropriate for individual pupils. This enables pupils to practise their skills and build self-esteem and self-belief.
- Leaders and managers have a deep understanding of their school and its performance. They correctly identify areas for improvement such as early years provision. They act on them in a very timely way. Leaders are continually looking for ways to improve the outcomes for pupils.
- Governors have a wide range of skills and experiences that they bring to the school. They all have responsibility for identified areas. They are diligent in making sure that they understand and monitor these areas. This results in further school improvement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to develop and embed the new assessment systems.

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

Yours sincerely

Sara Roe
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, the inspectors discussed the work of the school with you, the deputy headteacher, the designated safeguarding lead and the coordinator for special educational needs. Inspectors also talked to four members of the governing body, including the vice-chair. We examined information about pupils' progress and looked at records of pupils' achievement and progress. The inspection team checked a range of documentation, including leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness, external evaluations of aspects of the school's work, records of safeguarding and minutes of meetings of the governing body. We considered six written responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and comments from three parents in person. The team visited all classes to observe teaching, learning and assessment. A formal discussion was held with one pupil, and the pupil was accompanied by an interpreter using signs and symbols for communication.