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Mr Rohit Naik  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Naik

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

Following my visit to the school on 2 April 2019 with Cole Andrew, 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 November 2014.

### **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 inspirational school leader. You are passionate about the importance of understanding pupils' behaviour. After the last inspection you reflected on how well your school provides pupils with lifelong skills. You analysed how successful your pupils were after leaving Hope School. You knew that pupils could control their behaviour in school, but your analysis showed that they did not have the same level of control away from school. You realised that difficulties forming emotional attachments lay at the heart of the challenges your pupils faced. This led you to take the decision to completely change the management of pupils' behaviour in your school.

Based on academic research you have developed a school that is sensitive to supporting pupils with attachment and complex trauma histories. This new approach removed reliance on external sanctions and rewards to control behaviour. The emphasis changed to understanding the internal reasons for behaviour. This approach empowers pupils to control their own behaviour without external controls. Extensive training and support from external specialists helped staff develop new skills. Training and support were also provided to families. This helped parents to continue to develop pupils' understanding of behaviour at home.

The impact of this new approach has been the creation of a school focused on understanding why pupils struggle to control their behaviour. With support from expert staff, pupils develop strategies for controlling their behaviour. Pupils also understand the

behaviour of their peers. While in school, inspectors saw examples of pupils reminding each other how to manage their behaviour. This demonstrated the clear understanding across the school of the attachment-sensitive approach. Behaviour in school is exemplary and pupils make outstanding progress in their learning.

Throughout the period of change you have been ably assisted by your assured, enthusiastic leadership team. Leaders are very knowledgeable about insecure attachment and the impact of trauma and adversity upon child development. Academic research informs decisions about all aspects of the school. There is a highly reflective culture in the leadership team. This ensures that the impact of change is carefully monitored. This means being prepared to change decisions that do not improve outcomes for pupils. For example, at an early stage in the development of the attachment-sensitive approach leaders chose an adult to support each pupil. This did not lead to strong relationships between pupils and their support adult. Leaders decided to allow pupils to choose the adult they preferred to help them. This has led to very strong relationships between pupils and their adult support.

Your staff have adopted the new approach with enthusiasm. Highly effective training and support have given them confidence to move away from a reliance on rewards and sanctions. Teachers have gained confidence and sustained high-quality teaching. Staff value highly the support that leaders provide for their mental health and well-being.

Governors initially questioned the need for change. Following an outstanding judgement at the last inspection they felt that change was unnecessary. After a period of discussion and training governors now fully support your new approach. Governors have seen at first hand the impact of the new approach and are proud to be associated with an innovative school.

Parents and carers spoken to during the inspection are very positive about the impact of your school on their children. Comments, such as 'I got my life back when my son started at Hope', 'Hope has changed my life and it's changed my family's life' typify the attitude of parents.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They explain how being at Hope has helped them to manage their behaviour. Some pupils have attended several other schools and are able to recognise that at Hope they are understood by staff and helped to catch up with their learning.

The local authority fully supports the attachment-sensitive approach you have adopted. They recognise the transformation seen in pupils' ability to control their behaviour. You have started to work with other schools in the area. The local authority is keen to further develop this work. There is a strong desire to share the impact of this approach as widely as possible.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified that your school website did not contain all the necessary information. You have addressed this issue and the website now meets requirements. It also now contains a wealth of material explaining the attachment-sensitive approach you have adopted. It is an excellent source of information for parents wanting to find out more about this topic.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a very strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. All staff are thoroughly trained. They recognise their responsibilities concerning keeping pupils safe. Leaders ensure that all staff maintain their understanding through regular briefings. This ensures that staff are highly vigilant about potential risks.

The curriculum teaches pupils how to help keep themselves safe. Days are set aside to focus on personal, social and health education; for instance, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe online. Pupils say that 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 online. Parents spoken to during the inspection said that staff keep their children safe.

Staff create a climate of curiosity in class. If there are questions related to a safeguarding issue, they take time to address it. For example, during a lesson on Shakespeare's play 'Macbeth' a pupil asked about knife crime. This prompted a discussion about the implications of carrying a knife in the present day.

## **Inspection findings**

- I focused on different lines of enquiry during the inspection. I wanted to find out about the impact of the attachment-sensitive approach on pupils' outcomes. The majority of pupils come to Hope School with levels of attainment below the national average following time missed at previous schools. The attachment-sensitive approach helps to build pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence. Pupils learn to take responsibility for their own behaviour without reliance on rewards and sanctions. Careful assessment enables teachers to identify gaps in learning. A highly personalised timetable and effective support help pupils to catch up with missed learning. The impact of this is that pupils gain knowledge and confidence and make outstanding progress.
- I also wanted to find out how effectively leaders spend pupil premium funding. Leaders have an accurate view of the barriers faced by disadvantaged pupils. Their support in overcoming these barriers ensures effective use of pupil premium funding. Leaders maintain detailed records of the allocation of this money. They monitor and evaluate their use of this funding effectively. For example, leaders identified that disadvantaged pupils were making slower progress in mathematics than in English. Pupil premium funding was used to support pupils in developing key mathematical skills. The impact of this has been a reduction in the different progress that disadvantaged pupils make in mathematics and English.
- The curriculum was identified as a key strength of the school at the last inspection. I wanted to find out whether this was still the case. The school day starts with individualised activities designed to prepare pupils for learning. These include occupational therapy sessions linked to improving handwriting skills. There are also activities designed to improve long-term memory. This helps pupils to retain learning so that it can be easily recalled in the future. The day continues with lessons based around the national curriculum. A rich, imaginative and varied learning experience significantly contributes to developing pupils' knowledge. All subjects are closely linked

to literacy and numeracy. Pupils can clearly see the connections between subjects they learn. Each afternoon there are sessions to develop pupils' life-skills, such as cooking, shopping and physical activity. Pupils gain accredited qualifications in these lessons.

- The high-quality curriculum is both motivating and exciting. Pupils read with confidence and enjoy writing. Pupils are very engaged in their learning. Behaviour is excellent and pupils make substantial progress. The curriculum equips pupils with the academic and emotional skills they need for the next stage of their education.
- Attendance was another line of enquiry. Attendance is currently above national averages compared to special schools. It has improved steadily since the introduction of the attachment-sensitive approach. Systems for monitoring absence are meticulous and robust. Analysis of data includes looking for trends in absence which may indicate needs that are not being met in school. This is an example of leaders' strategic approach to addressing barriers to attendance.
- There is a small group of pupils who are persistently absent. Monitoring of these pupils is part of the school's safeguarding system. Support plans address the reasons for absence. Staff work closely with the pupils' families to improve attendance. As a result, the proportion of pupils that are persistently absent has reduced significantly compared to last year.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff continue to develop work with the local authority to share good practice in supporting pupils with attachment disorder.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Burgess  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, inspectors met with you and other leaders. An inspector also met with five members of the governing body and with representatives from the local authority.

Inspector met formally with groups of students. Inspectors also spoke with pupils in lessons and at social times. An inspector also met with a group of parents.

Leaders accompanied inspectors on visits to classrooms, where they observed teaching

and learning across a range of subjects. They also looked at pupils' work across the school.

Inspectors examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding. They also scrutinised a range of policies and leaders' school improvement plan and self-evaluation. Inspectors also checked on the school's website.

Inspectors considered the responses of six parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, along with free-text comments. They also took account of 16 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.