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Miss Beth McPhail  
Headteacher  
Hazelbeck Special School  
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West Yorkshire  
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Dear Miss McPhail

### **Short inspection of Hazelbeck Special School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 March 2019 with Fiona Dixon, 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 February 2015.

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

You are a dedicated leader with a clear vision and a strong ambition that the school effectively prepares pupils for life after school. Since your appointment in September 2017, you have built on the strengths identified in the previous inspection report and ensured that the school continues to meet the needs of all pupils. As a result, the leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You and senior leaders have created a school community which is reflective and aims to continually improve through research and professional enquiry. The leadership team and the trust board of directors have a thorough understanding of the school's effectiveness and areas for improvement. This is because you know the school exceptionally well. Although the curriculum is well designed to meet the needs of pupils with different special educational needs, leaders have started a curriculum review to ensure that, as pupils with different special educational needs join the school, the curriculum continues to be closely matched to each pupil's needs.

The strengths in teaching identified in the previous inspection report have been maintained. Pupils make exceptionally strong progress as a result of teachers' excellent subject knowledge, the personalisation of the curriculum, detailed assessments and the very effective team work between teachers and support staff. Leaders constantly monitor and analyse the quality of teaching. The information collected from classroom visits, the checking of pupils' work and the assessment of

pupils' progress leads to targeted professional development. Leaders then check that training has had the intended outcome. You described that recently an improvement in the differentiation of learning objectives was a target for teachers' professional development. It was evident from inspectors' observations in lessons that this target had been successfully achieved.

Leaders regularly check and analyse information on pupils' progress, responding promptly when a pupil's learning slows. As a result, pupils quickly regain learning and almost all pupils meet or exceed their progress targets. Leaders have developed systems to check and moderate the accuracy of pupils' assessments and progress. They plan to improve these systems to ensure that the information collected is used as effectively as possible.

Staff ensure that teaching is pitched closely to the needs of each pupil, and they record progress in every lesson, using a detailed assessment system. This information enables staff to confidently assess when each pupil has achieved their learning outcome and when they are ready to move on to the next step. Staff have effectively included the desired outcomes from pupils' education, health and care plans into their planning and have identified these as desired learning outcomes. As a result, teaching closely matches the outcomes agreed with parents in pupils' annual review meetings.

Pupils' progress at key stage 4 and in the sixth form is based on the accreditation of pupils' practical and vocational skills. At the end of key stage 4, pupils transfer to the school's sixth form, where the curriculum emphasises the development of pupils' personal and social independence skills. Leaders have worked closely with local further education colleges to ensure that the courses in the sixth form effectively prepare pupils for the next stage in their education, training or employment. As a result, pupils successfully move to post-school provision.

Pupils with the most complex needs and those with autism make strong progress because staff know pupils exceptionally well. For those pupils with complex needs on the autism spectrum, staff respond sensitively and positively to pupils' gestures and non-verbal communication. As a result, there are strong relationships between pupils and staff, and pupils make strong progress in lessons. Staff use signing, symbols, photographs and specialist switches to ensure that pupils with multi-sensory impairments are effectively engaged in learning. Because of this, pupils are able to make choices about their learning and work independently for short periods.

Most parents highly value the work of the school. The comment of one parent was typical of many when they said, 'The staff go above and beyond to provide a rich, challenging and effective curriculum for my child. They encourage him to be the best that he can be by promoting independent thinking and learning. My child has made incredible progress academically and with his behaviour.'

Staff report that they are happy and very proud to work at Hazelbeck Special School. They have confidence in senior leaders, they feel well supported and they consider that leaders use professional development to encourage, challenge and

support staff development. Staff say that they are treated with respect and consider that leaders are interested in their well-being.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have maintained a strong safeguarding culture where pupils' safety and well-being have a high priority. The systems to safeguard pupils are robust, and safeguarding information is carefully monitored by leaders, who take prompt action when safeguarding concerns are raised. The school's safeguarding records are detailed and stored securely. Appropriate checks are made on staff and visitors, and the single central record meets requirements. The arrangements for pupils arriving at school are well organised. Staff work effectively with other agencies to secure good outcomes for vulnerable pupils. Policies and procedures are reviewed regularly, and staff are knowledgeable as a result of regular safeguarding training.

Pupils say that they feel safe, that they are well cared for and know that they can talk to staff if they have any concerns. Pupils say that teachers are there to help them and that their views are valued. This is as a result of the strong caring ethos throughout the school and the respectful relationships between pupils and staff. Most parents agree that their child is safe in school and that they are well looked after. Pupils are taught how to stay safe online and how to keep safe in practical activities in school, and when out of school.

The trust has a strong oversight of safeguarding and effectively monitors and supports the work of leaders to ensure that safeguarding procedures are effective. The school's safeguarding staff meet regularly with the trust safeguarding officer and colleagues in other schools to ensure that there is strong and consistent practice.

### **Inspection findings**

- Inspectors started by checking whether the school is a safe place for pupils. Inspectors' observations, our assessment of the school's culture, policies and procedures, and our discussions with leaders, staff, pupils and parents confirmed that safeguarding is effective.
- Next, we wanted to check whether the curriculum was effective in preparing pupils for life after school. The curriculum is well designed, rich and varied and meets the needs of all pupils. The school's motto of 'enjoy, learn, succeed' is evidenced by pupils' positive attitudes in lessons and their strong behaviour. This is because teachers make learning relevant and lessons enjoyable. There is strong focus on the development of pupils' communication skills, their personal independence and the practical use of literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils are helped to stay safe and make choices about the things that affect them in school. Staff use signing, symbols and technology effectively to involve pupils, particularly those with the most complex needs. Older pupils are helped to prepare for leaving school, and they learn vocational skills through a well-designed curriculum and carefully chosen work-related activities. Pupils are encouraged to be respectful and help one another. Pupils take part

enthusiastically in a wide range of lunchtime clubs, after-school activities, musical performances and residential visits. These activities are highly valued by parents.

- We wanted to understand whether pupils make strong progress from their individual starting points. Pupils succeed in their learning because staff work together effectively and know pupils exceptionally well. Pupils' achievements are assessed when they join school and staff choose learning objectives which are relevant for each pupil and which link closely to the desired outcomes in their education, health and care plan. Staff use detailed assessments which record the development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding, and decide when they are ready to move on to the next step in their learning. Leaders check pupils' progress regularly and work closely with teachers to ensure that pupils' targets are rigorous and challenging. Pupils in key stage 4 and in the sixth form successfully complete accredited courses on the practical use of literacy and numeracy skills and the development of vocational skills. As a result, pupils are well prepared to leave school and successfully move to the next stage in their education, training or employment.
- Next, we wanted to understand how effectively leaders used the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, and the funding for those pupils who joined the school in Year 7. Leaders use this funding effectively and ensure that it has impact. Leaders regularly check pupils' progress and respond promptly when a pupil's learning slows. Funding is used to support school improvement priorities, provide curriculum interventions, small group teaching, and support residential activities. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make as strong, and sometimes better, progress than other pupils. Pupils in Year 7 were helped to settle effectively in school through the support of additional staff and, for some pupils, the use of individual timetables and personalised learning programmes.
- Because teachers make lessons enjoyable and pupils are well supported in school, attendance is strong, and most pupils are rarely absent. As a result, attendance is improving and is better than similar schools. Most pupils travel to school on transport provided by the local authority. Other pupils are brought to school by their parents or carers. Leaders closely monitor attendance and challenge poor attendance, working with other agencies to ensure that pupils are safe when they are not in school. A small number of pupils are unable to attend school regularly because of complex medical needs. The school's outreach team works closely with pupils and their families to ensure that pupils can continue to learn at home and are well prepared to return to school.
- The trust has high ambitions for the school. Trust directors know the school well, and its strengths and development priorities. Directors provide effective challenge to the headteacher and senior leaders through well-designed performance management systems. As a result, the school is a valued member of the multi-academy trust and makes an important contribution to the development of the trust.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to refine the assessment system to enable the information collected to be used as effectively as possible
- the outcome of curriculum review is implemented promptly.

I am copying this letter to the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bradford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

George Gilmore  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, inspectors held meetings with you, the senior leadership team, representatives of the multi-academy trust board of directors, including the chief executive officer, and five parents.

Inspectors observed pupils arriving at school, at lunchtime and as they moved around the school. Inspectors visited nine lessons accompanied by leaders, spoke to pupils, looked at their work and spoke to teachers and support staff about lesson planning, assessments and record-keeping. Inspectors looked at pupils' workbooks, curriculum plans, schemes of work and assessment records. An inspector met members of the school council. Inspectors briefly visited lunchtime clubs and an after-school club.

Inspectors looked at the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan and discussed these with you and senior leaders, and representatives of the multi-academy trust. Inspectors looked at a range of information, including pupil files, education health and care plans, the minutes of meetings of the trust, a peer review report and school policies. Inspectors discussed the curriculum, pupils' progress and assessment information with you and senior leaders. An inspector had meetings with the leaders responsible for safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and the use of pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding.

Inspectors considered the 19 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 12 responses to the free-text service for parents. Inspectors considered 42 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and two responses to Ofsted's online pupils' questionnaire.