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Ms Karen Alty
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Alty

Short inspection of Holly Grove School

Following my visit to the school on 15 June 2017 with Lisa Morgan, 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 May 2014.

This school continues to be outstanding.

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

In the short time you and your deputy headteacher have been in post, you have set the 'gold standard' for Holly Grove. You have made sure that the school never rests on its laurels. Staff applaud the improvements you have made to take the school from strength to strength.

You have made sure you have an accurate, well-informed understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. Together, you and your deputy headteacher make sure that any emerging issues are nipped in the bud so that the school's high standards are maintained. You are tireless in your pursuit of excellence.

Your team cannot praise you and your deputy headteacher highly enough. You appreciate, respect and support them so that they look forward to each day. The long tenure of many of your staff is testament to your school being a great place to work. You ensure that Holly Grove is a warm, welcoming school which pupils, parents and staff are proud to be a part of.

Your investment in staff training and development pays dividends. Many of the team have 'risen through the ranks'. Staff applaud your ability to spot potential and shape successful careers. You welcome teachers at all stages of their careers who

each bring a new dimension to the school's work. Well-embedded succession planning ensures that any transitions are seamless, including the recent change of senior leaders. You demand the best for your pupils. While you provide comprehensive training and support to help your staff to be the best they can, you will not accept second best in your workforce. You recognise the importance of keeping the team on its toes. You do not shy away from taking decisive action when it is required.

No one loses sight of the fact that this is first and foremost a school. You and your staff go the extra mile every day to make sure pupils are ready to learn. Moreover, once pupils are in lessons, teachers make sure not a moment of learning time is wasted. Consequently, pupils make strong progress across the curriculum from their different starting points.

You and your team have gone above and beyond what inspectors asked you to do following the previous inspection. You have overhauled the way in which you present pupil performance information for all subjects, not only reading and writing. Subject leaders analyse the data and summarise the findings. They use this information to inform their subject action plans to secure continuous improvement. You have also increased the frequency with which you collect the data. This has strengthened your assessment and tracking system further, so that you and your colleagues can identify any patterns and trends quickly.

Governors are delighted with the format in which information is presented to them. They feel confident to check this information in advance of their meetings, so that they can prepare any questions they may have. These changes have enabled governors to ask more searching questions than previously, which help deepen their understanding of the school's performance. In addition, governors make regular visits to school to make sure they use a range of evidence to inform their view of the school's performance. However, governance could be further strengthened by governors having a closer eye on attention to detail.

The improvements you have made are helping you all to make sure that each and every pupil reaches their full potential. As a result, the proportion of pupils making rapid progress from their starting points, including in English, has improved since the previous inspection.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a culture of vigilance at Holly Grove. Together with your school business manager, you ensure that there are thorough checks to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children. Everyone keeps meticulous records so that nothing gets missed. New staff take part in an intensive induction programme. You also make sure that existing staff keep up to date through frequent training sessions. All staff are highly skilled. They are confident and competent in managing the wide range of needs presented by pupils. Your family support worker reaches out to parents and carers, making sure that they have the help and support they

need. From the first time parents step foot in your school, staff start to build strong, lasting relationships between home and school. The family support worker signposts families to the different local services which are available to help them. Families are delighted with the levels of support they receive, telling inspectors that 'nothing is too much trouble for the school'. Pupils are adamant that everyone is kind to each other. Parents are confident their children are safe and exceptionally well cared for.

Inspection findings

- Pupils love coming to school. They like the adults who work with them. Your pupils try hard with their work and are keen to make sure they always do their best. Pupils are polite, attentive to their teachers and respectful to their classmates, staff and visitors.
- Your pupils' enthusiasm for school means that the vast majority rarely miss a day. However, a small minority of your pupils have complex medical needs which require hospital stays. Your staff make sure that everything is done to help these pupils catch up and keep up with their school work.
- Children get off to a flying start when they join your early years class. Well-embedded routines help pupils to settle quickly. The class is a hive of activity from the minute the school day starts. Consequently, your youngest children make strong progress from their different starting points.
- You are held in high esteem by other schools and the local authority. You make sure that you share your wealth of experience and expertise with your colleagues in local schools. The advice and guidance you offer teachers and teaching assistants, the support for pupils and help for families in your local area are all invaluable. Quite rightly, Holly Grove is regarded as a 'beacon of excellence'.
- You make sure that pupils and their families are well prepared for the move to high school. Staff make every effort to ensure that pupils will be successful when they start their new school and any anxieties are kept to a minimum. The bespoke transition plans help pupils and their families get to know their new school well. Moreover, high school colleagues appreciate the wealth of information you provide to them about these new pupils. Senior leaders from one high school told me how you continue to offer support after the pupils have moved on. As a result, any emerging issues in the early days of Year 7 are resolved quickly.
- You give a great deal of consideration to the design of your curriculum. You make sure that there is a good balance between your pupils' individual needs and statutory requirements. You are creating more opportunities for 'hands on' learning. In particular, you are helping to build the academic resilience pupils will need to grapple with tricky problems in mathematics as you introduce more reasoning and problem-solving.
- Parents receive a wealth of useful information about their children's progress. Daily communication between home and school helps parents to support what pupils have been learning in school. The frequent formal and informal family events mean that parents are regular visitors to school. The recent addition of a

large school hall means that your parents are able to get even more involved in school life. At Holly Grove, strong home-school partnerships make a positive impact on outcomes for pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that you enhance your current excellent practice to carry out comprehensive checks to reassure yourselves that all policies and procedures are read, understood and actioned by staff, senior leaders and governors.

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

Pippa Jackson Maitland
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- Inspectors met with senior leaders, teaching and support staff. An inspector met with four members of the governing body.
- Inspectors also spoke to representatives of the local authority and a local primary school, as well as senior leaders from a local secondary school.
- Eleven parents responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. Inspectors spoke to four parents during the inspection.
- An inspector met formally with a group of staff and considered the 43 responses to Ofsted's online survey of staff.
- There were no responses from pupils to Ofsted's online survey, so inspectors spoke formally to a group of pupils as well as informally to pupils during the school day.
- Inspectors visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning and check on their work in books. We made some of these visits to classrooms with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at information about pupils' progress and attainment, the school's self-evaluation and action plan as well as a range of other documentation.
- Inspectors conducted a full review of safeguarding, including an evaluation of the school's policies and procedures to keep pupils safe, training records, recruitment checks and record keeping.