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Dr Sue Fisher
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Dear Dr Fisher

Short inspection of Percy Hedley School

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 2018 with Christopher Campbell, 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your leadership group are a very strong and effective team. You lead the school with drive, passion and commitment. Importantly, you have secured the strong support of all staff who share your deep commitment to ensure the best outcomes for every pupil at Percy Hedley School. As a result of the school's effective leadership and your colleagues' successful work, pupils develop the confidence and skills to achieve their individual potential. This was evidently clear throughout the inspection.

At the last inspection, it was identified that leaders needed to share good practice more widely so that the skills and expertise of future leaders were developed. You have managed this well. You have ensured that professional development is an integral part of developing staff, so that they can best support the pupils in your school. The staff have expressed their appreciation that the training and development opportunities they receive are of high quality, and have helped them to develop their skills and understanding. Many have developed through into leadership roles in school. The positive impact of the professional development was clear throughout the inspection. Staff value the information and training they receive. This helps them to ensure that they can fulfil their roles to the best of their ability.

Your self-evaluation is clear. It presents an accurate picture of the school's effectiveness. For example, you understand the need to constantly reflect on good

practice, and develop the skills of staff to enable them to provide the best possible outcomes for pupils. There are clearly identified actions in the school's development plan which show your drive to always look for ways that the school can continually improve.

Governors make a very strong contribution to the school. They work closely and effectively with you and the senior leadership team. As a result of comprehensive reports, well-organised governing body meetings and regular visits to school, governors are knowledgeable about all areas of the school's work. You actively involve them in discussions and decision-making and value the way that they challenge you and hold you to account. Governors have used regular visits to increase their understanding of pupils' needs. They talked knowledgeably to inspectors about the progress that pupils are making, for example in their academic, social and emotional development and in the development of their communication and interaction skills.

Parents were unequivocally positive about the school's work. The parents who spoke to inspectors highlighted the hard work and dedication of the whole staff team and the significant support you give to pupils and their families.

The actions taken by you, other leaders and governors have placed the school in a strong position to continue to deliver excellent provision for pupils. You have ensured that there are very strong systems in place. These are used well by all staff, leading to timely adaptations to planning and school improvement to ensure a constant focus on excellent pupil outcomes.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

You have an excellent understanding of pupils' health and medical needs and you work in close partnership with a range of professionals and health practitioners to make sure that pupils' needs are met. You and your staff are knowledgeable about the things that make children who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities vulnerable. This is because you provide regular high-quality training and updates for staff, and you make sure that concerns about pupils are identified and reported in a timely way. Similarly, you are vigilant in checking that pupils who are fully dependent on adults for their daily care needs are safe and protected.

You work closely and effectively with other professionals and services to make sure that pupils who may be vulnerable are identified quickly. Pupils and their families receive the timely and effective help and support they need.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I was keen to find out more about how you are assessing and tracking the progress that pupils are making and whether this gives you an accurate picture of how well they are doing. I found that the school has developed a very

clear and comprehensive assessment and tracking system. This is used very effectively to monitor the progress of individual pupils and groups of pupils, particularly in the core curriculum areas. It is being used by staff to recognise the areas that each pupil could further develop and then plan highly effective individual pupil learning plans. Management of pupil performance information and the standards they are achieving is incisive and highly organised. Leaders are using this information to drive school improvement and to raise standards across the school even further. Leaders' skills and understanding around assessment, particularly in the field of SEN and/or disabilities, are shared with other schools as part of the teaching school's focus. Leaders agreed that the systems in place to track and monitor the core subject areas could be extended to support all areas of the curriculum in the same highly effective way.

- I was particularly interested in how school leaders have ensured that the quality of teaching seen at the last inspection has been maintained. It was clear that staff have a deep understanding of pupils' needs and there are strong, trusting relationships between staff and pupils. This, and the very clear focus on the needs of the individual pupil, has led to a very pupil-focused approach to teaching and learning. Inspection evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that teaching continues to have an outstanding impact on pupils' outcomes over time.
- I also wanted to consider the effectiveness of leaders' actions around maintaining high levels of attendance throughout the school. We agreed that there are some circumstances when absence from school is unavoidable. However, I was impressed by leaders' commitment to supporting families in ensuring that all pupils attend school whenever possible. There is a large support network in school which is highly effective in supporting families. This is reducing absence from school. Inspection evidence shows that many pupils attend school well and have their aspirations for future independent lives developed by innovative approaches to employability skills. These include excellent attendance. Leaders agreed that they could further develop their pathways to independence and work with pupils to further develop their understanding of future training and employment.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's excellent assessment system is refined so that it is used across all subject areas
- the strong partnerships with local businesses continue to develop so that the information, advice and guidance given to pupils further strengthens their understanding of future training, education or employment.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Garton
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, and other leaders. They met with seven representatives from the governing body and spoke with parents and pupils. Inspectors visited lessons, some jointly with leaders, scrutinised the work in pupils' books and folders, and spoke to pupils about their learning. Inspectors considered the results from Ofsted's online surveys. There were 42 responses to the online parent survey, Parent View, and a very high number of responses to the staff survey. Inspectors examined a range of documents including information about attendance, safeguarding, the school's self-evaluation, the school's development plan and information about current pupils' learning and progress.