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Mrs Gillian Temple
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Dear Mrs Temple

Short inspection of Mayfield School

Following my visit to the school on 23 January 2018 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 October 2012.

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 team are clear, confident leaders, who have a strong vision for the school and believe that there is no glass ceiling for your pupils. The school continues to go from strength to strength because you are always seeking to improve, grow and adapt to the changing needs and interests of your pupils.

Your school motto, 'Everyone thinking. Everyone learning', neatly captures the essence of you and your staff. You are a thoughtful and reflective team that is always seeking to ensure all pupils receive the very best education. Adults and pupils alike share a love of learning and are encouraged to develop and flourish. You have fostered an environment of care and nurture throughout the whole school community. Staff, governors, parents and pupils are rightly proud of being part of Mayfield. Together, you break down barriers to learning, ensuring that pupils feel safe and confident to be all they can be, both academically and in their personal development.

The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, are very positive about the school. They feel that their children are well looked after, happy and well taught. Parents would recommend Mayfield without hesitation to others. Their comments indicate the high regard that they have for the school. For example, they described the school as 'amazing' and

'friendly and welcoming' and say that communication is 'brilliant'. They also say their children have 'come on in leaps and bounds', and have a real sense of 'belonging and being part of something'.

At the previous inspection, the inspector asked you to ensure that the new early years provision was of the same high quality as the rest of the school. This has been fully addressed and is now a strength. The early years curriculum is expertly adapted to meet a wide range of learning needs in an extremely caring and nurturing environment. Leaders are skilled at identifying children's needs and using this information very effectively to set highly personalised goals for each child. The information is then used to plan activities that capture the interest and imagination of children. Teaching is skilfully adapted according to the needs of an individual or group. For example, a group of inquisitive, lively children were offered the opportunity to get up from their seats and dust and clean like Cinderella. In another group, adults worked beside the children to support them to touch and feel the items associated with 'Goldilocks and the three bears'. Adults are highly competent at helping children develop the skills that they need to be successful learners.

You have very effective systems for gathering assessment information and take account of a wide range of progress measures, for example, in English, mathematics, communication and physical development. This information is rigorously collected by leaders to track the progress of pupils against their highly individual targets. In this way, you ensure that they are making as much progress as possible and any dips in pupils' progress are picked up quickly. As a result, the vast majority of pupils make outstanding progress. Teachers are successful in drawing on comprehensive information about every pupil to establish their needs and next steps in learning. You are currently working on bringing together assessment information on an individual pupil into a single overview. The accuracy and consistency of assessment information is regularly checked within school and across local schools, including other special schools. However, I agree with you that exploring opportunities to compare assessments and standards with a wider group of special schools will ensure that you maintain your high standards and expectations.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a strength. You and your team has ensured that pupils are in a safe and secure environment by promoting the clear message that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Safeguarding records are rigorously kept, are detailed and are reviewed regularly to ensure that they meet statutory requirements. Appropriate training for staff and governors is undertaken frequently and is up to date, including that related to keeping pupils safe from radicalisation and extremism, child sexual exploitation and neglect.

You and your leadership team offer the highest standard of vigilance and support for vulnerable pupils. Leaders have extremely effective relationships with external agencies and are instrumental in contributing to the safeguarding of the vulnerable pupils in your care.

Pupils say that they feel very safe and well cared for in the school. They feel confident that adults will help them if needed. Older pupils talk with knowledge about the ways that they can stay safe in a range of situations, including personally and online. The very large majority of parents feel that you and the staff keep children safe.

Inspection findings

- Despite catering for a wide range of pupils from early years to the sixth form, there is an excellent degree of continuity and consistency across the whole school. All teachers and support staff are skilled at delivering an appropriate curriculum to the pupils they teach. Activities are stimulating, and regularly centred around the interests of pupils. All adults have a deep knowledge and understanding of their pupils and so, within each activity, they are offered a highly personal learning experience to match their needs and goals. The exceptional relationships that adults have with pupils shine through every interaction and ensure that pupils trust staff completely to care for them and support them in their learning.
- The broad and balanced curriculum that you offer pupils is motivating and exciting. You offer a rich, imaginative learning experience that significantly contributes to developing pupils' self-belief, confidence, personal development and life skills. For example, pupils in the sixth form benefit enormously from their enterprise experiences and pupils in key stage 2 loved writing about the wonderful dragon that they had created.
- You prepare young people exceptionally well for the next stage of their life. You ensure that pupils follow pathways that give them the appropriate skills and knowledge to be successful and offer them practical careers guidance. Pupils have the opportunity to complete work experience. For some pupils, this has involved working in a local garden centre or as a bus escort. For those pupils who are not yet ready to work in the community, jobs are created within the school such as working as a swimming attendant supporting younger pupils. The strong working relationship you have with colleagues in local colleges enables pupils to make a much easier transition from school. The overwhelming majority of pupils who left school last year secured a place in employment or at college.
- Leaders and governors recognise the great importance of good attendance for keeping pupils safe and giving them the very best opportunity to do well in school. You have thorough systems for monitoring absence and good attendance is frequently celebrated. For some pupils, attendance is sometimes erratic for medical reasons. However, you keep careful checks on absence, resulting in the vast majority of pupils not taking time off school without good cause. Pupils enjoy their learning and want to be in school. One parent commented: 'My child is always happy to go to school and when it is the holidays, counts the days until it's time for school again.' Another comments: 'My son loves to go to school, often grabbing his bag and walking to the front door to wait for the bus at weekends.'

- There are a number of strengths at Mayfield. During the brief time we spent with you, we were struck by how reflective you are as a leadership team. You are receptive and keen to take on new ideas, though honest and accurate in your evaluations as to whether they have been successful or not. Although your governing body is a relatively new team, governors bring a great deal of expertise and experience. They are confident to challenge and have pupils at the heart of everything they do.
- The way you develop a pupil's ability to communicate is impressive. You strongly believe that it is the key to unlocking a pupil's potential. Staff are sensitive and patient in their approach to helping pupils access and develop a means of communication. Adults are adept at matching a communication method to a pupil according to their needs and barriers. You use a wide range of communication techniques, including developing speech, sign language, symbols and the use of information and communication technology. Adults are determined that pupils will communicate as successfully as they can. This determination ensures that all pupils are encouraged to participate in their learning. Most importantly, adults help all pupils to find their voice.
- Sport and physical activity are an important part of school life and are a strength. You offer therapies that involve trampolining and the school is a lead practitioner in a therapy method that maximises the development of a pupil's mobility. Leaders are very proactive in seeking every opportunity for pupils to participate in sport and physical activity. All pupils have access to activities such as swimming, cycling and running the 'Mayfield mile'. Pupils regularly attend local facilities to enjoy and participate in everything from soft play to archery, golf, multi-skills and even fishing. The school benefits from having productive partnerships with Carlisle Football Club and the Copeland School Sports Partnership. Mayfield staff and pupils enjoy sport so much that they have two sports days a year. These are considered to be a highlight for staff, pupils and parents. Older pupils were delighted to participate in Cumbria's regional sports competition, entering teams in boccia, table tennis, table cricket and football.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to refine systems for the assessment of pupils and explore opportunities to compare assessments and standards with a wider group of special schools.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Eastwood
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, inspectors met with you, your deputy headteacher, your assistant headteacher and special educational needs coordinator. An inspector also met the person responsible for maintaining safeguarding records. I met with a group of five governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also spoke to a representative of the local authority. We visited lessons and scrutinised pupils' work. We took account of the 17 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the views of a few parents who contacted the school via text messages and an email. We took account of the 57 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and spoke with staff during the day. We met with two small groups of pupils. We observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. We looked at school documents including: information about pupils' achievement; the school's self-evaluation; the school improvement plan; behaviour and incident logs and documents relating to safeguarding.