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Ms H Chadwick
Headteacher
Millwood Primary Special School
School Street
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Dear Ms Chadwick

Short inspection of Millwood Primary Special School

Following my visit to the school on 19 July 2017 with Claire Hollister, 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 2013.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders have exceptionally high standards and expect the best from the staff and pupils. Your school has an excellent local reputation and is very popular. Once parents look round school, they want a place for their child. Over the last few years, there has been a change in your school population. There has been an increase in the number of pupils on roll and in the complexity of pupils' needs. You and your senior leaders have embraced these changes with impressive vigour, as described by a member of staff in Ofsted's online staff survey, 'There is a constant drive to meet the changing needs of our pupils.'

Leaders know the school extremely well. School documentation is exemplary. You analyse every aspect of the school's provision to inform decisions to move the school forward at a dramatic pace. Governors share your high ambition and your drive for school improvement. They know the school well, understand key issues and share the vision for the school. They come into school often, joining training and sharing celebration events, such as prize-giving. The representatives from the governing body I spoke to have a clear understanding of their strategic role and fulfil it very well. They hold leaders to account, challenging the school to improve further.

Your continual striving for improvement has not distracted you or your staff from creating a focused and welcoming school. The vast majority of parents that responded to Ofsted's online survey and the school's survey show that pupils enjoy school and parents are very positive about the progress that their children make. Inspectors saw the positive interactions between staff and pupils throughout the school day. Staff greet pupils with genuine pleasure when pupils arrive in school. In class, adults were very clear what pupils were learning. They treated pupils respectfully, sometimes sharing a class joke. At playtime, staff played and engaged pupils in activities. Staff performed physical handling movements carefully, treating pupils with dignity. At the end of the school day, staff waved pupils goodbye. These strong relationships allowed pupils to thrive and develop skills, maximising learning opportunities. The 'Millwood family' extend this welcome to all visitors to the school.

The previous inspection asked you to check pupils' work by ensuring that staff write up observations of pupils' gains as they happen. Prior to each lesson, teachers prepare a target 'post-it' for each pupil. This enables all class members to know what the teacher wants each pupil to learn. Staff use the 'post-its' to record each pupil's small steps of progress. Teachers collate this information in pupils' workbooks, which show pupils' achievements and their exceptional progress over time. Inspectors saw evidence of this when they visited classrooms and looked in pupils' workbooks. This consistency and methodology of assessment is impressive.

All the staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire are proud to work at your school. Morale is high. Teachers and teaching assistants are extremely positive about the culture in the school and the senior leadership team. They value the focused training opportunities they access, which enrich their skills and knowledge of the curriculum and how different groups of pupils learn. For example, recent training on foetal alcohol syndrome meant that teachers changed their teaching approach to improve pupils' learning. Leaders manage teachers' performance successfully through a comprehensive appraisal system. However, you agreed that the systems in place for supporting and challenging the work of teaching assistants could be developed further.

Your school is building its reputation as a hub of special educational needs and/or disabilities expertise within Bury. For example, the 'Millwood project' supports individual pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in mainstream schools. This project is in its infancy but it is already having a positive impact on mainstream provision. Your well-trained staff deliver courses and share strategies on how to support pupils who have challenging behaviour. Mainstream colleagues value and deploy the de-escalation techniques shared. Both projects are enhancing mainstream colleagues' skills, enabling them to support pupils' learning more effectively.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are meticulous, detailed and of high quality. Leaders provide regular training to ensure that all staff know how to keep pupils safe in school,

which they reinforce through notices around school and on staff identification cards. All staff that inspectors spoke to were clear about processes and procedures they had to follow. Effective induction processes meant that this included supply staff.

Leaders hold weekly meetings with professionals from other services to discuss any pupils causing concern. This focus ensures that leaders follow up concerns quickly, engaging the support of multi-agency colleagues where necessary. Leaders are persistent when they are concerned about a pupil's well-being.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have developed a highly organised curriculum, which ensures that pupils have variety and diversity in their learning and meets the different needs of the school population exceptionally well. Teachers plan activities that thrill and inspire pupils to learn: for example, what it is to be a French citizen, studying African art patterns and designing a playground for school. Pupils access numerous sports, including enjoying the daily Millwood mile. The football team were particularly proud of their recent wins in a football competition. Leaders plan diligently for pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. The eco club focus is on recycling. Staff and pupils use the prayer room to reflect and to pray, and a recent assembly looked at the armed forces day.
- Teachers enhance the curriculum through exhilarating enrichment days, educational visits and theme weeks. Teachers plan each activity with expertise to ensure that it provides exciting practical experiences to bolster pupils' learning. For example, during a recent science 'forces' week, pupils developed their investigation skills by carrying out 141 experiments. Teachers used this as an opportunity to upskill, sharing the best practice of teaching aspects of science.
- Leaders are always looking for ways to improve their curriculum. The school is forward-thinking and is currently further enhancing the pathway for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and those who have sensory integration difficulties, building on the already exceptional provision.
- Pupils make exceptional progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their starting points. Without national benchmarks, leaders have extrapolated data from a previous system to have a measure of what outstanding progress looks like and to moderate their judgements. Across the curriculum, pupils achieve remarkably well and teachers record pupils' attainment in their workbooks.
- Teachers diligently check pupils' progress each month to ensure that pupils are on track with their learning. If not, they take immediate action. They collate pupils' achievement to inform leaders about areas for improvement. For example, leaders have identified that boys perform well in writing but girls do better. This is already on the school improvement plan. Subject leaders use this information to provide additional training to improve staff subject knowledge or to provide additional resources.
- Leaders monitor attendance conscientiously. They provide interventions to support attendance, using the pupil premium grant where possible. They are persistent if they do not know why a pupil is absent. They are quick to visit a

pupil's home if they consider that a pupil is vulnerable. Pupils rarely miss a day, persistent absence is diminishing and days lost to unauthorised absence have decreased rapidly. However, the medical needs of some pupils mean that they are unable to attend school as regularly as they should.

- Leaders have developed excellent transition arrangements. They gather and share information with parents, health and care professionals, nurseries and schools to ensure a smooth transition for pupils. The school has well-established relationships with the local secondary school. If pupils are moving to a different school, leaders build new relationships quickly. Pupils value their personalised transition booklets, which support their movement to the next stage of education very effectively.
- Teachers personalise transition arrangements to suit the needs of the pupils. The success of transition arrangements can be summarised by one parent's comment: 'Transition arrangements have been so well organised that they have been really reassuring to me and my son. He's ready to move on because he has been so well prepared. He does not feel anxious about moving on'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they review their current systems for supporting and challenging the work of teaching assistants in order to further improve the quality of support for pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Jean Robinson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we met with you, your senior leaders, teaching staff, support staff and health professionals. I met with the acting chair and the vice-chair of the governing body. I spoke with an external consultant. Inspectors considered the 21 written responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, the 51 responses to the school's survey and spoke to parents at the start of the school day. We considered the 34 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. We visited classrooms with you and your senior leadership team, observed teaching and learning, and scrutinised pupils' workbooks. We spoke to pupils during lessons and at breaktime. We observed behaviour around school. We examined a wide range of school documentation relating to school improvement planning, self-evaluation, attendance, pupils' progress and outcomes and safeguarding.