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Ms Alison Ashley
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Ashley

Short inspection of Hebden Green Community School

Following my visit to the school on 27 March 2018 with Nell Banfield, 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 July 2014.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your clear aim to support each pupil's 'mind, body and soul' is carried out with precision, compassion and care. Your inspirational leadership team has created a culture of exceptionally high aspirations. Governors are knowledgeable about pupils' needs. They set the tone for the school and allow the passion of staff to shine through. Your humility has engendered the excellent relationships that run throughout the school. Staff expertly break down barriers to learning in a relentless pursuit of excellence. They provide pupils with opportunities to be themselves and look beyond their often complex needs to see the person inside. The result is that staff have a profoundly positive effect on the lives of pupils and their families. The responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and carers, Parent View, were overwhelmingly positive. One parent commented on how the school has 'a significant impact on developing pupils and their enjoyment and participation in life'.

The school is constantly evolving and seeking to improve. Your commitment to extending the school Nursery and to developing specific provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder shows that you are leading the way in responding to pupils' needs. The school has acted positively upon recommendations made at the last inspection. The skills of middle leaders contribute effectively to developing provision for pupils. You have developed learning pathways for pupils and ensure that each pathway clearly provides evidence of pupils' progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders and governors are aware of the high level of vulnerability of the pupils and students in their care. Students in the sixth form debate issues to develop their confidence in reacting socially with others and expressing their own views. They understand that they do not need to defer to others. This significant risk has been addressed by leaders so that students can increasingly manage their own safety.

Leaders' work with outside agencies to support pupils' well-being is exceptional. They have addressed issues such as sexting and online safety by involving the local community police officer to talk to older pupils about the dangers of misusing technology.

Staff are vigilant and have an acute awareness of pupils' needs. Leaders and staff observe pupils' reactions intensely to identify when a pupil may be upset or distressed. Staff are attuned to the slightest change in behaviour, particularly for non-verbal pupils. One parent responding to Parent View wrote, 'I feel happy and confident that my child is safe and cared for at school. I don't need to worry as he is in the best hands possible.'

Inspection findings

- As part of this inspection we agreed on a number of key lines of enquiry. We agreed to look at how effectively leaders ensure that pupils are challenged to progress well in their learning and development. You have high aspirations for each and every pupil. The 'wall of fame' greeting visitors into the sixth-form building celebrates the achievement of past students who have gone on to study at degree level or who have been successful in gaining employment. You have structured the work of the school to promote pupils' independent living skills. Even children in the early years are provided with targets to develop their independence. Inspectors observed how staff encouraged children to develop their self-care skills. Pupils in all classes exhibit persistence, enjoyment and determination to succeed. They understand the relevance of what they are learning. Individual learning plans for pupils are brought to life by skilled staff who promote pupils' next steps in learning. Observations of pupils' progress, particularly that of pupils who have profound and multiple difficulties, celebrate their unique achievements. The tracking of pupils' progress is accurate and individualised. Pupils make exceptional progress in their development.
- We also agreed to look at how careers guidance and work experience link with students' interests and aptitudes to prepare them for independent living. Careers advice is built around the student. The best use is made of independent consultants to support the school's work to ensure that students receive a balanced view. You have ensured that the school consistently promotes employability and independent living skills. Well-thought-out work experience supplements students' development where appropriate. Industry projects add interest and engagement to develop pupils' skills. Inspectors observed pupils in key stage 4 searching for jobs and discussing work experiences as part of their

life-skills learning. When students leave post-16 education, their destinations are appropriate to their needs. They are positive about their time at the school and the way in which they have been supported in becoming well-rounded young adults.

- Another key line of enquiry for this inspection was to look at how effectively leaders support pupils' social, emotional and mental health (SEMH). This aspect of the school's work is exemplary. Pupils have access to a wide range of emotional-literacy support. A school counsellor, a family support worker and music therapy cater for all aspects of pupils' mental health. All staff exhibit clear care and concern for pupils and treat them with dignity. Staff ensure that they respond to pupils' emotional needs straight away. This team of professionals communicates and plans well to ensure continuity of care. Provision is holistic. This, added to the excellent quality of relationships in the school, makes pupils' SEMH seem like a hidden need, such is the effectiveness of the staff's work.
- Finally, we looked at how effectively leaders use professional development to support staff, particularly middle leaders. Staff value the comprehensive opportunities to improve their skills. Since the previous inspection senior leaders have embraced the development of middle leaders. The appointments they have made have been astute and responsive to the ever-changing needs of pupils. Staff development is planned strategically to match the diverse needs of pupils. Staff are very positive about the support that they receive from senior leaders. They are dynamic and their energy and drive is palpable. Governors are aware of the need to continue to provide opportunities for staff in order to retain them and to ensure that they keep a highly skilled and stable staff. This is a real strength of the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to respond to children's needs by extending their Nursery provision
- they further develop their bespoke curriculum for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Bentham

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with leaders and governors to discuss safeguarding and aspects of the school's leadership and management. We visited all classes with senior leaders and talked to pupils and students about their work. We reviewed documentation about safeguarding, including the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff. We reviewed behaviour logs and spoke with pupils about behaviour and safety at the school. We conducted a scrutiny of pupils' work files and records of staff observations detailing pupils' progress. We heard pupils read as part of their work in lessons. We reviewed documentation, which included pupils' individual plans and targets, the school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses and the school development plan. We took into account 21 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, 13 responses to the pupil survey and 27 responses to the staff survey. We spoke with a range of staff about the opportunities that they have to develop their skills.