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Mr Darran Nash
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Dear Mr Nash

Short inspection of Gilded Hollins Community School

Following my visit to the school on 10 July 2018, 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 good in January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have ensured that the school is a warm, welcoming and friendly learning environment that serves the local community well. You work closely with a number of partner schools to help you check the accuracy of aspects of the school's work. This, in turn, also enables the staff to engage in a wide range of relevant professional development activities with other teachers. The school development plan accurately identifies key priorities to further improve the school. Leaders' and governors' self-evaluation of the school is honest.

Parents and carers speak highly of this school. They told me that you and members of the staff were approachable and accessible to speak to. Those that I spoke to and those that responded to the Ofsted surveys were positive in their views of the school. One view, typical of many, was: 'My child has thrived and grown in her years at this school. She will be sad to leave.'

The behaviour of the pupils continues to be a strength of the school. They behave well in lessons and their conduct around school is exemplary. Pupils told me that bullying and name-calling were rare. They said that they know they can speak in confidence to their class teachers who always make time to listen to their concerns. Pupils have many opportunities to engage in sporting events and take on a range of extra responsibilities. Pupils benefit from the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument in Year 4. This continues into Year 5 and 6 for those who wish to continue to receive individual tuition. Pupils enjoy the diverse range of extra-curricular experiences available. Examples include football, cricket and embroidery.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, both in school and away from school. They told me about the dangers that they may face online. They shared examples of the work that they have done on e-safety.

Governors are dedicated and committed to support all aspects of the school. They ask you challenging questions and hold you to account for aspects of the school's performance. They visit the school to engage in regular monitoring activities with the staff. Governors are very clear in their understanding of the school's strengths and what needs to improve to develop the school further. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities well.

Since the previous inspection, you have taken effective action to address areas that were identified for improvement. You make careful checks on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. You monitor pupils' outcomes closely. Published performance information indicates that the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics is above the national average for those leaving Year 6.

Together with senior and middle leaders, you make careful checks to ensure that pupils are sufficiently challenged in their learning. You have worked hard to ensure that pupils write and read as well in other subjects as they do in work for English. This was evident in some of the work that we viewed together. For example, in Year 2, we observed pupils applying their research skills to write about aspects of ancient Greek life. In Year 3, pupils were actively applying their mathematical and reading skills to locate features in an atlas, whereas pupils in Year 4 had produced high-quality biographies of Pablo Picasso, linked to their art topic.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have created a culture in school where pupils and adults are safe. You make careful checks on the suitability of adults who work on the school site. Training is kept up to date. Where members of staff are newly appointed, they receive training in a timely manner. You keep detailed records of your work with partner agencies. Governors check the single central record regularly.

You are proactive in maintaining and improving a strong safeguarding culture. For example, you noticed that when parents enter the school grounds via the external gate, they are not visible from the office. As a result, you are in the process of building works to remodel the front of the school. This will ensure that staff in the office have a clear view of visitors as they enter and leave the school grounds. Pupils that I spoke to said that they felt safe in school.

Inspection findings

- The early years is an exciting and vibrant learning environment. You told me about the difficulties that you have faced this year with a high staff turnover in the early years. You have put clear plans in place to address this for the autumn term. Published performance information indicates that there has been a slow

decline in the proportion of children achieving a good level of development since 2015. Despite the many obstacles that you have faced this year, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has improved since 2017. Children now benefit from the support of staff, who question and challenge them carefully. Children have many opportunities to investigate the world around them. They have opportunities to write, build, create and design. However, from our observations we found that many learning activities lacked direction. Children do not have enough opportunities to read instructions and engage in learning activities with greater levels of independence.

- You have put decisive actions in place to reverse a decline in published results of the national phonics screening test. As a result, outcomes have improved. You have ensured that all teachers and teaching assistants are fully trained. You have invested heavily in a range of new resources. You have chosen to adopt a multi-sensory approach to the teaching of phonics. As part of this approach, you have facilitated a parents' workshop to teach parents how to model effective reading with their children. I was able to see the results of your actions when I listened to a number of pupils in Year 1 read.
- You consistently strive for better attendance across the school. You have taken effective action to ensure that the school attendance figure remains better than the national average. Last year, the number of pupils who were persistently absent was high in comparison to the national average. One of the ways that you have addressed this is through the effective use of your pupil learning mentor, who works closely with vulnerable families. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is now well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards in mathematics rose between 2016 and 2017 for pupils leaving Year 6. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher standards rose at a slower rate. You put clear plans in place to increase the proportion of pupils achieving the higher standards. A more focused and sharper analysis of the data would have shown you that girls were doing considerably better than boys. Together, with the deputy headteacher and the mathematics coordinator, we viewed samples of pupils' work from this year. We saw that pupils are challenged well to achieve the higher standards. Pupils have many opportunities to explore and expand on their answers by applying reasoning to solve problems.
- You are currently introducing a new approach to how mathematics is taught in the school over a three-year period. Current pupils' performance information indicates that there are no longer any differences in the progress of boys and girls in any year group across the school. However, we did agree that, together with leaders and governors, you should sharpen your focus on the analysis of pupils' performance information in all subject areas, so that you can plan to provide the best support to pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- children in the early years are provided with more challenges that allow them to apply their reading skills to access learning activities with increased levels of independence
- they sharpen the focus of their analysis of assessment information to enable them to provide better support to 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 Wigan. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Donald
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and the senior leadership team to discuss the school's effectiveness. I met with the chair and two other members of the governing body. I met with a representative of the local school's partnership. I met with a group of pupils at playtime and I heard four children from Year 1 read. Together we visited classes in all key stages. We viewed samples of pupils' work in the classes that we visited.

I viewed a range of school documentation, including the self-evaluation and the school improvement plan. I scrutinised a range of documents in relation to safeguarding and safer recruitment.

I met with parents on the playground before school. I considered the 36 responses to 'Parent View', Ofsted's online questionnaire. I also took account of the 19 free-text responses. I considered the 24 responses to the pupil survey and the 14 responses to the staff survey.