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Mr Gary Johnson
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Johnson

Short inspection of Rumworth School

Following my visit to the school on 10 October 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 April 2014.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You lead a dynamic and innovative school which ensures that each individual is respected, cared for and challenged to achieve the very best that they can. Pupils are at the heart of the decisions that you make. Your staff focus relentlessly on equipping pupils with the knowledge, skills and understanding that they need to lead happy and successful lives. You are well supported by senior leaders and your staff team. Governors support and challenge the work that you do and hold you to account effectively. Together, you have ensured that the school has not stood still since the previous inspection and continues to develop and improve at pace.

You are leading the school through a period of significant development as pupil numbers increase rapidly and the nature of pupils' strengths and needs becomes increasingly diverse and complex. Alongside this, you have guided the school through a tumultuous period during which the school was severely damaged by a tornado and underwent major repair and refurbishment. Throughout this time, you have ensured that the school has maintained its high standards and continued to evolve to meet the changing needs of its pupils.

Pupils love coming to school and particularly like the new specialist rooms for science and computing. They are polite, friendly and very positive about their experiences of school. Pupils feel safe and know how to ask for help if they have

any concerns. Pupils value the work that the staff do to encourage positive behaviour and can talk confidently about their plans for the future.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive and feel that their children are safe in school. They think that the curriculum is designed to meet their children's needs and that this leads to high levels of engagement and strong progress. Parents value the support that their children receive to gain confidence and behave appropriately. They say that 'the staff know the pupils very well'.

Members of staff are motivated and enthusiastic about their work. They feel valued and welcome the opportunities that they are given to develop professionally. They appreciate the work of leaders in developing the curriculum and organising the timetable to allow individual pupils to flourish.

There is a strong culture of reflection and honest self-evaluation throughout the school. Leaders and teachers are open to new ideas in order to make improvements. For example, you have made changes to the curriculum so that pupils' learning focuses on preparation for adulthood to an even greater extent. Similarly, you have ensured that pupils study for relevant qualifications to support their transition into their chosen careers.

Teaching is of a consistently high standard. You monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching thoroughly. Detailed feedback ensures that teachers have a clear understanding of their strengths and the areas that they need to improve. Members of the support staff know pupils well and provide skilful support that helps pupils to succeed. At the previous inspection, you were asked to ensure that best practice in teaching was shared more effectively. You have organised for teachers to share their practice and support each other's development in small groups. Teachers value their participation in these groups and consider that they have made a strong contribution to the further development of teaching.

Pupils make consistently strong progress and they achieve a broad range of relevant qualifications. However, the progress made by sixth-form students in English and mathematics is not as strong as that of pupils in the rest of the school. The progress of students in the sixth form in other subjects is consistently impressive and almost all students achieved some form of external accreditation last year. Furthermore, these students benefit from an extensive range of opportunities to enhance their personal development. In particular, they make giant strides in their journey towards independence and future employment.

Senior leaders have successfully refined the school's assessment system to respond to the growing complexity of the pupil population and the broadening scope of the curriculum. The system works well and enables teachers to match work carefully to pupils' abilities. However, you acknowledge that the system does not currently enable you to monitor and evaluate the quality of pupils' learning over time as precisely as you would like. This is particularly the case for pupils with more complex needs who are now joining the school in greater numbers.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have created a strong safeguarding culture in the school. Policies and procedures are fit for purpose. The school's single central record is compliant and effective safer recruitment procedures are in place. Members of staff are well trained in safeguarding and know what to do to keep pupils safe. They say that they know 'everyone is responsible for safeguarding'.

The new premises are secure and the site is well managed. The school's daily breakfast club ensures that many pupils have a healthy start to the day and are ready to learn when lessons begin. A range of strategies are used effectively to enable pupils to express their emotions in a supportive and healthy way.

Staff are highly effective in supporting pupils to behave well. Their skilled and subtle intervention enables pupils to regulate their own behaviour sensibly and contributes to the emotional health and safety of pupils. On the rare occasions that challenging behaviour occurs, it is well managed and staff ensure that pupils' dignity is respected at all times.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, I shared five key lines of enquiry with you and these formed the basis of the inspection. The first of these focused on the actions that leaders had taken to reduce persistent absence. Leaders have developed supportive plans with families to improve the attendance of pupils with complex medical conditions or behavioural issues. This has had a positive impact and improved the attendance of these pupils. As a result, pupils with more complex medical needs are far more likely to attend regularly.
- The next line of enquiry explored whether the curriculum meets the increasingly broad range of pupils' needs. Senior leaders evaluate how well the curriculum meets the needs of pupils and make necessary changes. As a result, the curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant. The curriculum inspires pupils to learn and underpins the impressive progress that they make.
- A particular strength of the curriculum is the work-related learning element that provides pupils with opportunities to acquire employability skills. Pupils are able to make informed choices regarding the areas of work in which they are interested. They complete work experience placements that are closely matched to their interests, aptitudes and ambitions. As a consequence of this high-quality work, a large proportion of pupils advance to paid employment after they leave the school.
- The fourth line of enquiry focused on how effectively leaders and governors have met the challenge presented by the rapid increase in pupil numbers. Governors have worked closely with senior leaders to develop leadership capacity at all levels in the school. Leaders have ensured that the new school building is fit for purpose and can accommodate the increase in pupils safely. Teachers have been recruited to allow the school to admit increasing numbers of pupils while maintaining relatively small class sizes. As a result of these actions, the school

has adapted to the rapid increase in pupil numbers successfully and continued to provide high-quality education in all key stages.

- The final line of enquiry focused on how well English, mathematics and life skills are taught. The quality of teaching in English, mathematics and life skills is strong. Teachers know their subjects very well and plan learning activities with precision. Effective assessment ensures that work is well matched to pupils' abilities. Teachers use questioning extremely skilfully to check learning and to deepen pupils' understanding. Support staff are expertly deployed to support learning. Pupils' conduct is exemplary and levels of engagement are consistently high. As a result of the high quality of teaching, pupils learn rapidly and make consistently strong progress.
- Some of the teaching of English and mathematics in the sixth form is less strong. This is reflected in students' progress in these subjects. In other subjects in the sixth form, teaching is highly effective and students make excellent progress. As a consequence, students achieve a broad range of qualifications and are well prepared for adult life.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- students in the sixth form make stronger progress in English and mathematics
- the school's system for evaluating the progress of pupils is further refined, particularly for the increasing number of pupils with very complex needs.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Hanbury
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, senior leaders, middle leaders, governors, parents, pupils and members of staff. Inspectors looked at the school's website and read a range of documentation and records including minutes of governors' meetings, pupil progress reports, curriculum and attainment documents and safeguarding documentation, including the school's single central record. Inspectors observed teaching with you and conducted learning walks with other senior leaders. Inspectors participated in a scrutiny of pupils' work with school leaders. Inspectors considered 13 responses to Parent View.