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Mr Michael McCann
Headteacher
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Dear Mr McCann

Short inspection of Greenbank School

Following my visit to the school on 24 October 2017 with Lisa Morgan, 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Under your strong leadership and high expectations the school has continued to go from strength to strength. You are ably assisted by your assured, enthusiastic leadership team. Everyone in school lives up to your school motto, 'learning and succeeding together'.

You have created an environment that radiates the care and nurture of the whole school community. Together with staff, parents and pupils, you are rightly proud of being part of Greenbank. Together you break down barriers to learning, ensuring that pupils feel safe and confident to flourish, both academically and in their personal development.

The overwhelming majority of parents who spoke to inspectors, or responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, are extremely positive about the school and would recommend it to others without hesitation. All parents spoken to said that their children are 'happy and settled'. Many described the school as 'amazing' and said how they 'can't describe the difference it's made', that it is 'remarkable' and 'unparalleled'. They also say staff are 'approachable and caring' and 'go the extra mile' to meet their child's needs.

The very large majority staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire enjoy being part of the team at Greenbank and feel that the school is well led and

managed. Staff share your aspirations for pupils and wholeheartedly endorse the calm, orderly culture that has been created. There is a strong sense of the staff team working to achieve the very best for pupils.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified a need to improve pupils' progress even further by precisely identifying what individual pupils need to learn in each lesson and sharing this with them. You have developed a comprehensive system to assess how well pupils are progressing. Leaders use this information regularly to check that needs are being met and next steps in learning are being precisely planned. Teachers are confident to use assessment on a day-to-day basis. Their ongoing assessment in lessons allows them to adapt to individual pupils' learning needs quickly. This results in pupils receiving immediate feedback to support their understanding, confidence and skill development. Mistakes are positively picked up, 'unpacked' and used to good effect to further pupils' understanding. As pupils typically say, 'Mistakes are good, we all make them, and they help us learn.'

Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning. They often comment in their workbooks on what they have found easy or difficult and know their learning targets and goals. In many classrooms, pupils are actively encouraged to contribute to their own targets and move themselves on when they feel that they have achieved them. There is a culture within the school of pupils working toward full independence in their learning. As an older pupil explained, 'Adults have created a nice environment for us to learn for ourselves.' Consequently, the vast majority of pupils, regardless of their specific need, make outstanding progress from their starting points. This is consistent across key stages 3, 4 and 5, and includes the pupils who are most able. The progress of pupils who are disadvantaged is similar to that of their peers because of the quality of support they receive.

A varied and relevant range of qualifications is offered to pupils based on their needs and interests. These qualifications are focused on ensuring that they support pupils' next stage of life. Where appropriate, a number of pupils go on to study GCSEs in English and mathematics and where the school does not have the resources available themselves, GCSE subjects are accessed from the neighbouring secondary school.

You have been asked by governors to simplify the information given to them on the progress that pupils are making over the year. They would like something that is easy to see, 'at a glance', how well pupils achieve. However, the lack of detail in this document means that they are not in the best position to challenge leaders sufficiently as to whether all pupils are making as much progress as they could.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your team have ensured that pupils have 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. Your vigilance, and that of your pastoral team, around the care and support of vulnerable pupils is of the highest standard. 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 school. They feel confident that adults will help them if needed. Pupils talk with knowledge about the ways they can stay safe in a range of situations, including personally and online. The overwhelming majority of parents feel that you and the staff keep children safe and well looked after.

Inspection findings

- It is clear to me that you are a dedicated leader, who has worked successfully to develop your wider leadership team. This has created an energy and a sense of shared responsibility for school improvement across the whole school and is playing an important part in the school's success. You have an accurate, reflective and honest view of the school's strengths and priorities. You have very high expectations of what pupils can achieve within a highly nurturing and encouraging environment. The governing body is supportive, challenges you appropriately and makes a positive contribution towards moving the school forward. Consequently, there is good capacity to improve the school further.
- A line of enquiry for the inspection was whether pupils were receiving a suitably broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils are offered a rich curriculum that is closely linked to their needs and interests. Many teaching opportunities involve physical experiences such as outdoor activities or visits around the local area. Pupils and parents highly value and appreciate the contribution that staying in the school's residential facility offers pupils to develop vital life experiences and skills. Resources across the school are of a good quality and pupils are offered excellent opportunities to benefit from a variety of experiences, both real and simulated. As a result, pupils benefit from a stimulating, relevant and fun curriculum. For example, pupils are enjoying making vibrant puppets for a Christmas production and were excited to design, build and then race colourful go-karts around the school's cycle track. A striking feature is how well teachers link many activities around an aspect of personal development or life skills. This contributes enormously to pupils' success in developing self-confidence and social communication skills.
- Another line of enquiry for the inspection was the quality of careers guidance. The vast majority of pupils who attend the school also attend the school's post-16 provision. Students value the step-change in responsibility they experience in key stage 5 and how well they are prepared for their futures. They are offered a comprehensive range of careers guidance and opportunities for work experience and 'tasters' based on each individual need. Staff work hard to ensure that all students are supported according to their precise needs to maximise the success of their next step into adult life. The wide range of destinations that students go

on to are testament to the thoughtful consideration of staff when making sure that placements are just right for students.

- Attendance is currently above that of other pupils nationally in special and secondary schools. The systems for monitoring absence are meticulous and robust. The family liaison advisor and person responsible for monitoring attendance work closely together to provide good-quality liaison between families, the school and professionals that can offer support to those who need it. Good attendance is rewarded and has a high profile in school. There is a small group of pupils who are persistently absent. They are identified quickly and monitored as part of the school's safeguarding and pastoral support. Leaders have worked hard with this group of pupils and their parents, with notable successes.
- There are a number of strengths within the school. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and they conduct themselves extremely well around school. Pupils are very proud of their school and value the 'peace and calm' that the school promotes. They recognise how well it supports them to face their anxieties and enables them to work toward leading independent and confident lives. As a pupil explained, this school 'lets us express our personalities, which lets us be the person we are capable of'.
- A significant strength is the relationship that school has with its parents. Although most pupils arrive at the school via local authority organised transport, the school works very effectively at maintaining strong communication links with parents. They do this for example, through home-school books, telephone calls and invitations to events such as regular coffee mornings. Many parents say that staff are 'caring and easy to talk to'. They comment that they are not just there for their child but also for them. To this end, the school offers a range of training to parents and facilitates parents getting in touch with each other to share their experiences and support each other.

Next steps for the school

Leaders should ensure that:

- governors are provided with more detailed information to enable them to challenge leaders sufficiently as to whether all pupils are making as much progress as they could.

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

Sue Eastwood
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, inspectors met with you, your deputy headteachers and your head of sixth form. An inspector also met with key stage leaders, the family liaison advisor and the person responsible for maintaining safeguarding and attendance records. I met with two governors, and spoke to the chair of the governing body on the telephone. I met with a representative of Cheshire West and Chester local authority. We visited lessons and scrutinised pupils' work. We took account of the eight responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the views of five parents who talked with an inspector before or after the school day. We took account of the 33 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and spoke with staff during the day. We took account of the one response to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire and met with two 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.