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Mr Martin Moorman  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Moorman

### **Short inspection of Ravenscliffe High School**

Following my visit to the school on 17 October 2017 with Tudor Griffiths HMI, 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 November 2012.

#### **This school continues to be outstanding.**

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. From the start of the inspection, the passion that you and the rest of the leadership team have for ensuring that the school continues to improve was very clear to see. Your and other leaders' vision for the future demonstrates this clearly. It is shared by staff across the school.

You are unafraid to 'do things differently'. An example of this could clearly be seen in your innovative approach to performance management in which staff evaluation of each other plays a key role.

You are also exceptionally good at solving problems. The first and most pressing problem is the current large number of pupils who attend. As you rightly point out, the building was designed for 69 pupils. Currently, you have 168 on roll. The extra 99 pupils do cause problems in and around the building, particularly at change of lesson, break and lunchtimes. As pupils queued patiently to go to the playground at break, a comment made by one summed up the thoughts of others: 'It's like going to the shops at Christmas time, all the time.'

The extra volume of pupils and support staff also impacts on learning. Larger class sizes are more difficult to manage. It is only because of the excellent work of the talented teaching teams that you have in place that outcomes for pupils remain so excellent.

You and the team have formed very close liaison with over 40 local businesses. These contacts form an intrinsic part of your highly successful 'Springboard' provision, which focuses on ensuring that as many pupils as possible join the workforce after leaving school. Preparation for work starts early for pupils. Developing the skills of independent travel is often seen as a first step towards a successful transition to the workforce. Led by your independent travel coordinator, pupils learn to manage on public transport and the skills of navigating from one place to another.

You rightly see work placements as an essential precursor to pupils attaining paid employment. As many pupils as possible are offered work placements in a variety of different locations including shops, cafes, and in commercial kitchens. The key to much of your success has been the support provided to pupils while they undertake work experience. Trained staff accompany pupils and liaise closely with employers and pupils. This enables pupils to feel confident and develop the skills needed to undertake their new roles and responsibilities. Several pupils spoke to the inspection team about their work experience. All clearly enjoyed the jobs that they had undertaken and were animated and excited about being part of the workforce.

The school curriculum offers a wide range of different opportunities for pupils to learn at their own pace and in their own time. Staff set challenging targets which are regularly reviewed and link carefully to the expected outcomes identified on pupils' education and health care plans (EHCP).

A wealth of enrichment activities enables pupils to feel, touch, express and experience a very wide range of different encounters. These vary from visiting artists who work closely with pupils of all abilities to create breathtaking displays such as enormous whales hanging from the ceiling to trips to London and Europe. All these experiences and encounters enable pupils to develop curiosity and wonder and contribute to their very strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

You and your staff know and understand the needs of your pupils exceptionally well. They confidently support and challenge pupils to try even harder and in doing so enable them to address their fears and concerns. For example, the Royal National Institute for the Blind's buddy dog Rosie attends school every day and plays a key role in supporting pupils. Her role includes walking in the corridors with pupils and supporting pupils coming from the buses at the start of the school day. Few of the pupils whom the dog helps have visual difficulties, but all have emotional needs which she willingly and very gently supports.

Governors are longstanding, forward-thinking and highly effective at both supporting and challenging the leadership team. Since the last inspection, they have been awarded a national award in recognition of the quality of their governance and the chair of governors has received an MBE in recognition of his service to school governance. Governors are exceptionally proud of the achievements of pupils who attend the school, particularly the community work that pupils are involved with.

This includes singing to residents in local homes for the elderly and a biannual performance at Halifax Victoria Theatre.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Staff are exceptionally clear that safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone. Issues and concerns, however minor, are brought to the attention of senior leaders and the teacher responsible for safeguarding. Staff describe how any suspicious marks or bruises are checked by the safeguarding teacher, and any concerns are diligently logged on the school's online system. High-quality record-keeping is in place for incidents of difficult behaviour, including those where physical restraint is used. A careful log is kept to ensure that parents are informed at all times.

School leaders ensure that staff receive regular training and safeguarding updates which ensure that they are clear about current legislation and what action to take if needed. When asked during the inspection where to find information in relation to safeguarding, staff replied, 'It's available across the school, even behind toilet doors.' Despite the large number of pupils accommodated on the small school site, pupils' arrival at and departure from school are exceptionally well managed with almost military precision. Staff ensure that pupils' needs come first. The school nurse ensures that medication is collected from bus drivers and escorts and is all accounted for at both the beginning and the end of the school day. These very tight systems contribute to the very strong ethos of effective safeguarding practice across the school.

### **Inspection findings**

- A focus for the inspection team was ensuring that pupils were offered a broad selection of accreditation at the end of their time in school. A further focus was on the progress made by pupils, particularly the most able, across the curriculum. Discussions with middle leaders and work seen in the classroom showed that pupils are offered a broad range of accreditation, including English and mathematics, which matches both their age and their level of ability well.
- The quality and breadth of learning observed in classrooms also evidenced this well. For example, older pupils learning art were given the opportunity to try a range of techniques and resources, including some from China. This enabled them to produce some extraordinary work when painting still-life pictures of bamboo. The highly effective use of the interactive whiteboard enabled pupils to compare their work with the work of others. This enabled them to successfully reflect on, review and improve their work.
- Another focus for the inspection was the impact on the quality of teaching and learning of the increase in pupil numbers since the previous inspection. The inspection findings show that overall pupils' achievement is high both socially and emotionally, and academically. The use of EHCP targets to focus individual pupils' learning is done exceptionally well because staff know and understand the needs of pupils well. Class sizes have increased and this has put extra pressure on staff, particularly where classroom sizes are small. Highly effective teaching has ensured that pupils continue to make excellent progress overall. However, this

may not be sustainable if pupil numbers continue to grow before the new sixth-form building is complete.

- A further focus of the inspection was on the checks carried out by leaders on the quality of teaching and learning. Discussions with leaders to reference performance management data and observations made in the classroom clearly show that the current system in place to monitor the quality of teaching is effective.
- Senior leaders also carry out checks on pupils' progress across the school. However, at the time of the inspection, some systems and processes to measure progress were new and did not easily lend themselves to ready review of pupils' overall academic progress. Senior leaders became aware of this and recognise that more work is needed to fine-tune current systems to ensure that information on pupils' progress is more easily accessible.
- An analysis of the school website before the start of the inspection showed that some policies and schemes of work looked as if they had not been updated for some time. Most required information is in place and is easily accessible. Discussion with leaders and analysis of current curriculum plans showed that curriculum plans on the website were not current. School leaders are now planning to keep a closer eye on website materials.
- The school's use of social media is impressive. Leaders have used it effectively to 'shine a light' on the school and the achievements of pupils. Links with the local community have extended beyond the creation of employment for pupils, to enlisting the help of key business partners to raise funds for further improvement. A recent fundraising event raised over £250,000 towards the refurbishment of the new sixth-form building.
- Strong relationships with a range of different organisations, including banks and the local rotary clubs, have also enabled school leaders to develop a range of support for pupils' learning and facilities on the school's current site.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school website is checked regularly to ensure that information displayed is accurate and up to date
- the systems recently put in place to measure pupils' progress offer leaders and staff a clear picture of the progress made by pupils overall and the progress made by groups of pupils when relevant.

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

Yours sincerely

Marian Thomas  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

The team inspector and I observed learning in different classrooms across the school. Senior leaders accompanied us on two learning walks. The inspection team scrutinised a range of safeguarding, curriculum and leadership documents provided by the school. We met informally with pupils during break and lunchtimes. We also held discussions with staff, senior leaders, four members of the governing body and middle leaders. We also took into account the views of 54 members of staff and 17 parents who completed Ofsted online surveys, including Parent View.