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Mrs Sue Warner
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Warner

Short inspection of Melland High School

Following my visit to the school on 16 January 2018 with Ofsted Inspector Dawn Farrent, 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be outstanding.

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

Leaders, governors and staff are relentless in their pursuit of excellence in every aspect of the school's work. Senior leaders and governors have a deep understanding of the school's performance. You use this information well to help you pinpoint accurately actions to improve the school further. Leaders leave nothing to chance. Governors' insistence on frequent in-depth checks on the school's performance provide invaluable challenge and support to keep everyone on their toes. As one governor told inspectors, 'For Melland, the best is yet to come.'

Since taking over the reins, you have earned the trust and respect of your colleagues. You have developed a dynamic group of senior and middle leaders who share your high aspirations and expectations. Staff appreciate your willingness to listen to their ideas, allow them to try new ways of working and take part in high-quality training. Staff are quite rightly proud to work at the school.

Excellent relationships are key to your success. Staff work closely with pupils, their families and other professionals. Teaching staff make sure that they know each and every pupil extremely well. Pupils' best interests are at the heart of every aspect of school life. Parents and carers are delighted with the positive difference the school makes for their children.

School is calm and orderly. Lessons proceed without interruption. Pupils are engaged and enthused by the interesting and lively lessons teachers plan. Pupils are highly motivated by the school's reward system and enjoy earning merits. Pupils are proud of their achievements. Their improved attendance is testament to how much they enjoy coming to school. Pupils relish the wealth of extra-curricular and enrichment activities, including trips and visits, which complement the school's core curriculum.

Your school and staff are held in high regard by colleges, schools and the local authority. You share your exemplary practice willingly, valuing the mutual benefits of your support to other schools. You and your colleagues are excited by the ideas you gather from elsewhere. You cherry-pick the best of these ideas to benefit your own pupils.

At the last inspection, inspectors asked you to ensure that pupils fully understand how well they are doing. Pupils who spoke with inspectors described accurately how well they are getting on and what they need to do to improve. The school values pupils' views on their learning. Teachers make sure that pupils' views are incorporated into a range of plans, including personal education and education, health and care plans. Teachers have a deep understanding of their pupils' knowledge and skills and use this information highly effectively to plan lessons. You have also ensured that teaching assistants are trained very well so that they provide first-rate support to pupils. This helps pupils make the progress of which they are capable.

Since the previous inspection, you have worked successfully to develop a broad and balanced curriculum which meets the needs of different groups of pupils. The key stage leaders have considered carefully the rationale and design of the curriculum in key stages 3, 4 and 5. These leaders have succeeded in developing curriculum models which are enabling all groups of pupils, regardless of need, to thrive. These leaders have a good understanding of the different pathways offered at each stage but have not yet mapped these pathways across the school. Consequently, it is tricky for senior leaders to evaluate fully the effectiveness of the curriculum for individual pupils and groups.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are thorough and fit for purpose. Robust checks are carried out to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. The school's culture of vigilance ensures that any concerns are followed up assiduously and record-keeping is meticulous. The school works closely with external partners to direct children and their families to specialist support when needed. Staff ensure that pupils are made aware of risks both online and in the community, and are taught how to keep themselves safe. Staff, parents and pupils agree that pupils are well cared for and safe. Governors make sure that they keep a close eye on the school's safeguarding practice. Pupils are confident that any rare issues, such as name-calling, are dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff.

Inspection findings

- You and your colleagues ensure that additional funding, including pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding, are put to good use. Pupils who join the school in Year 7

receive the additional help they need to help them get off to a strong start in English and mathematics. Your investment in targeted support from the speech and language therapist, as well access to online learning programmes, makes a positive difference for pupils. Consequently, the youngest pupils get off to a flying start.

- Leaders ensure that the pupil premium funding helps disadvantaged pupils overcome their barriers to learning. For example, pupils enjoy taking part in the school's 'Rawchestra'. Additional funding has helped provide keyboards, guitars and drum kits so that eligible pupils can develop their musical skills. For those pupils who enjoy sport, additional funding supports pupils' participation in inter-school competitions.
- Your school's work with children looked after is held in high regard by the local authority. Your knowledgeable, designated teacher makes sure that the school's provision for these pupils is exemplary. Moreover, this teacher works closely with families and external agencies to make sure that children looked after get the help and support they need. Consequently, these pupils achieve high-quality outcomes.
- Governors continue to provide effective challenge and support to school leaders. Governors' deep knowledge of the school enables them to identify any emerging potential issues so that swift and decisive action can be taken. For example, governors have been relentless in their determination to improve attendance so that no pupil is disadvantaged by missing school. As a result of the school's actions, attendance improved considerably last year. Governors value the opinions of key stakeholders, including staff, pupils and parents. Governors use this information well to improve the school further. Governors have a wealth of experience and expertise. However, they do not rest on their laurels and are continually accessing further training to keep on top of their game.
- Quite rightly, leaders and staff are proud of the school's work with media and technology. You make sure that this expertise enhances every aspect of school life. For example, governors use video technology to capture pupils' views on different aspects of the school. This information helps governors with their evaluation of the school's performance and makes sure that pupils, together with other stakeholders, contribute to the school's improvement plans.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the different curriculum pathways followed by pupils from Year 7 to Year 14 are set out clearly to ensure that every pupil develops essential knowledge, skills and understanding as they progress through the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Manchester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Pippa Jackson Maitland
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with senior leaders and teaching and support staff. An inspector met with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, together with the chair and members of the governing body. Inspectors also spoke with representatives of the local authority, as well as a local college.

Inspectors considered the 54 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. An inspector talked with parents at the start and end of the school day. An inspector met formally with a group of staff and considered the 32 responses to Ofsted's online survey of staff. Inspectors talked informally with pupils throughout the school day. An inspector met with a group of pupils. Inspectors visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning.

Inspectors looked at information about pupils' progress and attainment and the school's self-evaluation and action plan, as well as a range of other documentation. Inspectors conducted a review of safeguarding, including an evaluation of the school's policies and procedures to keep pupils safe, training records, recruitment checks and record-keeping.