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Mrs Susan Campbell
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Dear Mrs Campbell

Short inspection of The Loyne Specialist School

Following my visit to the school on 24 April 2018 with Ofsted Inspector Adrian Francis, 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 June 2014.

This school continues to be outstanding.

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

Your and your senior team's ambitious and strong leadership provides clear direction for continual school improvement. Leaders, including governors and staff, share a passionate and unquestionable commitment to ensuring that pupils receive an excellent standard of education. You have clear, precise and appropriate plans in place for further improvements to the school. However, the way in which you record your high expectations of the impact of planned actions on pupils is not as clear as it could be. This means that it is more difficult for leaders and governors to check that actions are having the intended impact on pupils' learning and welfare.

Without doubt, you continue to ensure that pupils are part of a strong, effective learning community. It is this learning community that provides pupils with the excellent care, support and opportunities that they need to thrive. Parents and carers overwhelmingly support the school and they recognise the positive impact that high-quality teaching has on their children's learning and progress. Pupils and parents equally value the quality of your curriculum and the high-quality teaching which inspires pupils to learn. This includes the wide range of exciting experiences contained in the list of '100 fun things to do outdoors before you leave the Loyne'. Parents also benefit from excellent informal advice and support through the school's 'chill and chat' sessions. Parents' views are typified in a comment received through the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, which stated:

'The staff have the children at the heart of everything they do and I couldn't ask for anything more. They really do treat each child as one of their own and ensure that all the children can thrive. This is an amazing school!'

Such positive comments are only received because you ensure that the school's vision and mission are at the heart of your and your staff's work. Governors and staff share your high expectations and together you have successfully addressed the area for development identified at the school's last inspection. This related to enhancing further the role of the school in promoting good practice in other schools in the locality. Your strong leadership has ensured that systems and procedures for the sharing of expertise and resources have been formalised and they are now having a positive impact on other schools. You have developed the use of the school's website to allow other schools to access specialist resources and expert advice by using an online referral system. Experts from your staff regularly support local schools by providing specialist support and training. They deliver a series of successful training events known as 'host days'. Your school is held in high regard by special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs). It now provides support and advice about special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities for a range of schools in the local community and across a wide geographical area in three local authorities.

Safeguarding is effective.

The safety and safeguarding of pupils lie at the heart of the school's culture. Leaders and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are of high quality and fit for purpose. Knowledgeable staff meticulously implement the school's policies relating to safeguarding. Statutory checks are carried out on the suitability of staff to work with pupils.

Staff have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding, including that relating to online safety. Staff are extremely vigilant about the potential risks that pupils may face and they undertake detailed and high-quality risk assessments for learning activities to ensure that pupils are safe. Records are appropriate and scrupulously kept. Leaders share information with parents and the appropriate authorities effectively to ensure pupils' safety. Governors have ensured that the appropriate monitoring and filtering arrangements are in place for the school's internet connection.

Inspection findings

- The school's curriculum is extremely well designed. It reflects leaders' clear intent to provide pupils with the opportunities that they need to learn. A strong emphasis is placed on promoting the core skills that pupils will need to successfully develop their independence and succeed in their future lives. Where appropriate, pupils in key stages 4 and 5 study a broad and well-balanced range of subjects which enable them to achieve nationally recognised accreditations. Learning activities that promote communication, literacy and numeracy skills are carefully woven into a highly practical curriculum that prepares pupils well for their next stages of education, employment or training. For example, first-aid

skills taught throughout the school in role-play scenarios provide pupils with high-quality opportunities in which they develop their confidence and communication skills. Learning is highly personalised and closely linked to pupils' individual needs. Personal learning times are embedded into pupils' timetables and these ensure that each pupil receives the additional guidance, therapy and support that they need. Leaders' development of strong links with several local businesses ensures that a growing number of opportunities are available for pupils to develop their confidence and apply their skills to the world of work. For example, pupils successfully undertook a wide range of roles in a local hotel during a recent 'takeover day'. Other pupils continue to gain valuable experience from working in retail placements, on local college courses or in job placements in the school. However, leaders recognise that further work is required to challenge some community perceptions of pupils' employability. Nearly all pupils who leave the school at the end of key stage 4 or 5 continue in education, training or supported employment.

- The quality of teaching continues to be a strength of the school. Teachers care deeply for their pupils and have a profound understanding of their needs, which they use to excellent effect to promote learning. Teachers and other adults have high expectations of pupils and routinely set challenging activities that promote pupils' excellent progress from their starting points. The well-considered, wide range of therapy and learning activities meet pupils' needs closely, capitalise on their interests and ensure that pupils receive the levels of challenge that are appropriate to their needs. Teachers' and teaching assistants' excellent use of carefully crafted questions guides pupils' learning and effectively develops pupils' decision-making skills. Teachers' and other adults' use of technology to support learning is outstanding. The use of specialist software and digital devices is highly effective and ensures that pupils have equality of access to the curriculum. Teachers make excellent use of digital systems to record their sharply focused observations. They also use these systems to assess carefully the often very small steps of improvement that pupils make in their learning. Teachers review this analysis carefully to inform their planning and build upon pupils' successes. As a result, pupils grow in confidence and strongly develop their knowledge and skills. They frequently overcome considerable barriers to learning and make strong progress from their starting points.
- Leaders have a shared high expectation for the attendance of pupils at the school and they monitor pupils' absences meticulously. Well-considered and effectively implemented procedures ensure that the reasons for any pupil's absence are swiftly checked. Senior leaders' frequent analysis of absence data ensures that trends or concerns are quickly identified and appropriate actions implemented to address them. This includes the provision of support for the pupil's family. Registers of pupils' attendance are precisely kept using the correct codes. School-based information indicates that overall attendance for pupils of statutory school age was close to the national average for mainstream secondary schools in 2017 and above that of other special schools. A small number of pupils do not attend school for extended periods. This is typically for appropriate reasons that are closely linked to pupils' SEN and/or disabilities. These reasons include the need for pupils to attend frequent or extended hospital appointments, or illness related to their specific conditions. Leaders ensure that absent pupils receive high-quality

support to continue learning where appropriate. Teachers or other staff routinely visit homes to offer support and provide learning resources to pupils. When pupils are ready to return to school, effective systems ensure that any changes to their needs are carefully considered and that any required amendments to their support, the curriculum or the school environment are carried out.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- build upon their effective work with some local businesses to enhance the community's perception of pupils' employability
- ensure that the school improvement plan clearly identifies leaders' high expectations of the impact of actions on pupils to allow all in the school to more easily plot the journey of improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

John Nixon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, your senior leadership team, teachers and support staff. I also met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and the local authority adviser who works with the school. Inspectors spoke with some pupils during lessons and around the school, and met with the school council. We spoke with some parents and took account of the information contained within the responses to the online questionnaires for parents, Parent View, and staff. There were no responses to the pupils' questionnaire. I held a meeting with the SENCos from two local schools that receive additional support and staff training from your school.

Inspectors visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning and look at their work. We reviewed information about pupils' progress and attendance. We scrutinised documentation relating to school management, including the arrangements to ensure that pupils are kept safe.