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Dear Mr Spreadbury

### **Short inspection of Cicely Haughton School**

Following my visit to the school on 7 February 2018 with Elizabeth Ellis-Martin, 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 your predecessor 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.

Your strong leadership, and the expert support provided by the Manor Hall Academy Trust, are instrumental in ensuring that your pupils achieve excellent outcomes.

Since its last inspection, the school converted to become an academy. It is a founding member of the Manor Hall Multi-Academy Trust, a collaborative educational trust, which comprises five specialist provision schools. It is led by a chief executive, who oversees your work and the performance of the school. Cicely Haughton School provides support to the other trust schools as well as taking advantage of good practice seen in other trust schools. It also provides outreach expertise to other local schools and delivers services for children looked after on behalf of the local authority.

Cicely Haughton School was redesignated recently as a school for primary-aged pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Pupils join the school at different stages of their primary education, including in Year 6.

The learning environment of the school is inspirational. The main school buildings are maintained to a high standard and set amidst a picturesque landscape. Well-

furnished classrooms, and their adjoining social areas, contain displays which celebrate pupils' work. This creates an attractive, welcoming and uplifting environment for pupils.

Your teaching and support staff provide an impressive level of care and education, which is rooted in the excellent relationships that they foster with pupils, and their parents or carers.

All of the pupils who join the school have experienced disrupted learning and/or behavioural complications at their previous schools. Many pupils have mental health difficulties. Once they start at Cicely Haughton, pupils usually start to thrive because of the stimulating and caring education you provide for them.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leadership of safeguarding is very strong. Senior leaders in the school have established robust systems for protecting pupils from harm. Pupils are supported carefully during the school day by well-qualified teaching and support staff who do all they can to keep pupils safe. Their approach to safeguarding is typified by the comment of staff that 'just enough is not good enough'. When pupils are asked what is the most important thing done in school, they all say 'keeping us safe'.

Liaison with external agencies is frequent and helps to ensure that relevant information is shared and that any agreed actions are followed through. Senior leaders in the school do not rest until they are confident that pupils receive the support they require.

Regular training and briefings ensure that all staff are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and the risks faced by individual pupils. All staff who come into regular contact with pupils are trained in strategies for crisis intervention and prevention. All staff follow clear guidelines if they are involved in a behaviour intervention. Records of these interventions are comprehensive and are reviewed regularly and thoroughly by senior leaders.

Staff routinely undertake detailed analyses of any risks faced by pupils, including individual pupils, and take account of these when planning trips, outside activities or grouping pupils in the classroom.

The recruitment and vetting of new staff are done thoroughly. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the start of the visit, we agreed the main areas of focus for the inspection. These were safeguarding, attendance, care, behaviour and the curriculum, teaching and assessment. We also evaluated the steps being taken by the school to support staff well-being and those pupils who have mental health difficulties.
- The senior leader responsible for safeguarding ensures that systems and actions

reflect best practice. She works with colleagues from across the trust to improve safeguarding. Information from different parts of the school is shared in a timely manner, including through daily staff meetings. Regular reviews of any incidents lead to adjustments in practice, which ensure that procedures remain relevant and reliable. Safeguarding arrangements are very strong.

- A growth in the number of pupils with mental health difficulties has increased the need for support from the local authority's specialist mental health services. The necessary support has been slow to materialise and needs urgent attention.
- Pupils' attendance is very good. Although the published figures show some increase in absence over the last three years, these figures were for pupils who are no longer at the school. 45 of the 50 pupils at the school now attend more regularly than when they started. Others have maintained a good level of attendance. Pupils who were persistently absent at their previous school now attend regularly. Excellent relationships with parents, and the pupils' enjoyment of school, are the key reasons for their improvement in attendance.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons and around the school are impressive. Pupils are mostly very polite and friendly. They are eager to talk to visitors and share their experiences with enthusiasm. Although it varies between the different classes, depending on their age and development, pupils often help one another. Bullying is very rare. The pupils' behaviour during the inspection was often impeccable.
- Teachers and other staff manage the behaviour of pupils with considerable skill. They know them very well and plan activities carefully to minimise risk of any upset. Activities are often short, interesting and move along at a good pace. This helps pupils to engage, and maintain their concentration, well.
- All staff exercise a high level of care, which enriches pupils' day-to-day experiences in classrooms and around the school. Effective supervision helps to promote positive behaviour and attitudes, including at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Pupils were very well mannered, if a little noisy, while they sat and ate their lunch.
- Such positive relationships abound in the school and this makes pupils feel supported and confident. In turn, staff encourage pupils to strive even harder.
- The good range of subjects studied by pupils helps to develop basic skills as well knowledge and understanding of national curriculum subjects. Many lessons also promote rapid social and emotional development. All pupils have opportunities to learn a language and study major religions during 'theme weeks'. The amount of time spent on academic subjects is adjusted for pupils who need the most help in developing social skills.
- Pupils enjoy the wealth of activities provided outside of the classroom. Regular trips, including daily walks and visits further afield, a weekly enrichment afternoon and one-off events, such as archery, give pupils exciting experiences and allow them to learn in a variety of contexts.
- Teaching is very effective. In most subjects, teachers vary the work set to reflect the individual needs of each pupil. Teachers have sufficient subject knowledge in

the different subjects they teach.

- Teachers are adept at breaking learning down into small and manageable chunks. Their detailed understanding of each pupil, and the warm relationships they have built, allow them to steer each pupil through well-organised learning steps.
- Pupils are nearly always expected to work hard towards their short- and longer-term personal and academic objectives. They receive regular encouragement and are helped to persevere if they get stuck. Their enjoyment when they solve a problem, or understand something difficult, is palpable and often involves resounding cheers and applause.
- An effective system for setting targets and checking on progress, academic as well as personal, is established throughout the school. Day-to-day assessment in classrooms is usually very good. In most lessons, teachers use pupils' individual targets to plan work and check regularly on the pupils' progress towards them.
- In a few activities, designed primarily to foster social and emotional development, the focus on individual pupils' needs can be less secure. This means that some opportunities to hasten an individual pupil's progress towards their developmental or educational goals are lost. Notwithstanding this, all pupils make good or better progress during their time at school, including those supported by the pupil premium.
- Considerable emphasis has been placed by senior leaders on promoting staff well-being. They recognise that staff work very hard to provide a safe and calm learning environment for pupils. Opportunities for staff to meet and to share good practice and any concerns have been increased. Staff speak very positively about the school and are proud to work at Cicely Haughton.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more support is accessed from the local authority specialist services so that pupils' mental health needs are met more promptly
- all social activities have a strong focus on individual needs so that they contribute more towards to pupils' educational and emotional development.

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 Staffordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Cladingbowl  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors visited classrooms and observed teaching and learning. During their visits to lessons, they looked at pupils' work. Inspectors observed the pupils' behaviour in and outside of lessons. Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, including policies and records relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, curriculum, pupils' progress, as well as teaching and assessment. They spoke with staff, including senior leaders and held discussions with pupils. They met with the chair and vice-chair of the local governing body, and the chief executive of the trust. They took account of 12 responses to the staff questionnaire. They also considered eight written responses to Parent View, the online parental questionnaire. During the inspection, three teachers from another school were visiting to observe the quality of teaching at Cicely Haughton.