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Ms Lynda Thompson
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Dear Ms Thompson

Short inspection of Trafford Medical Education Service

Following my visit with Judith Straw, Ofsted Inspector, to the school on 3 November 2015, 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 good in September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Changes to the leadership team have ensured that the school's work to prepare pupils well for their next steps remains successful. The new leadership team has focused appropriately on boosting the academic achievement of all pupils. The school meets the emotional needs of this very vulnerable group of pupils expertly. This forms a solid base from which teachers can begin to close rapidly the gaps in pupils' learning.

Adults' expectations of what pupils can achieve have risen since the last inspection. Teachers make good use of the information they have about pupils' specific needs and ensure all teaching is centred squarely on raising the attainment of all pupils. Pupils enjoy coming to school because they begin, once again, to experience success in their academic studies. Many pupils overcome their fear of working in large groups and return to their mainstream school or move on successfully to further education. Last year, for example, all Key Stage 3 pupils reintegrated back into mainstream schools, while Year 11 leavers enrolled with local colleges or took up apprenticeships.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and other adults working at the school use their knowledge of pupils' specific needs and vulnerabilities well to ensure pupils' well-being and safety are given top priority. The school's own records show that, although the number of recorded incidents is low, leaders act swiftly to inform the appropriate authorities of any concerns the school may have about the safety of pupils. Other systems, such as the frequent meetings of the pastoral team, contribute greatly to ensuring pupils remain safe. Records of pastoral team meetings show that aspects such as admissions, reintegration, attendance, pupils causing concern and contacts with outside agencies are discussed regularly. This process ensures that leaders spot any safeguarding concerns very quickly and take suitable action.

The school's records show that the suitability of all those who work at the school is checked thoroughly. A robust record of all safeguarding checks is kept and maintained by the school. This meets statutory requirements. Leaders ensure all staff are trained appropriately in the safeguarding of children. For example, all staff recently received training to ensure they are aware of the signs of radicalisation and extremism and how to respond if they have concerns.

The school's records, along with parents' responses on the online survey Parent View, also show that pupils and their parents feel they are safe in school. Parents and pupils spoken to by inspectors corroborate this view.

Inspection findings

- Leadership, management and governance of the school are robust. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have accurately identified areas for improvement, such as the introduction of a nurturing area to even better support pupils who find it difficult to attend school. This action demonstrates that leaders' vision to improve the school is strong.
- Leaders have ensured that teaching focuses relentlessly on pupils' learning. The academic progress of pupils and the strengthening of pupils' emotional resilience are complementary. Consequently, pupils make rapid progress and begin to close the gaps in their skills, knowledge and understanding because they enjoy their learning.
- Evidence collected by inspectors shows that the quality of the leadership and management of teaching, learning and assessment is strong and underpins leaders' commitment to providing the very best quality of provision. The appointment of highly skilled teachers, for example, to teach English and mathematics has further raised expectations of what pupils can achieve. The whole-school marking policy is applied well in almost all areas of the school. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that many pupils respond swiftly to teachers' feedback and, as a result, deepen and extend their learning.

- Systems to monitor the quality of teaching are strong. The school's records show that leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching. Inspectors agreed with leaders' view that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Leaders' records also show that teachers are held to account for the quality of their work; leaders give them feedback and set them specific targets for improvement. This action has led to a weeding out of previous underperformance and a balanced approach to meeting pupils' specific academic and emotional needs. The rate of progress of the most-able pupils is showing signs of rapid improvement, particularly in subjects such as English, mathematics and science. Inspectors' scrutiny of leaders' tracking of pupils' progress shows that by the time many pupils leave the school, they have narrowed the gaps, in terms of GCSE grades, with their peers in mainstream schools. Leaders have quite rightly identified that their own analysis and evaluation of how well pupils achieve should make even sharper comparisons between pupils at the school and their peers with similar starting points.
- In a few instances, pupils do not always contribute enough to their own learning. Consequently, these pupils sometimes do not reach the standards of which they are capable. On occasions, teachers miss opportunities to encourage pupils to think for themselves, for example by giving feedback to the teacher or other pupils on a piece of text they have read. Progress by these pupils stalls because they do not deepen their learning or, on occasions, do not remember what they have learned from one lesson to the next.
- The curriculum is balanced well to meet pupils' specific needs. Art is a particular strength of the school. Displays of GCSE-level art work adorn the walls of classrooms and corridors and demonstrate the high standards reached by some pupils. Pupils enjoy other subjects such as food technology. Their success in these subjects contributes significantly to their growth in self-esteem. In turn, pupils grow in confidence and are prepared well for their next steps. Leaders are aware that the lack of availability of some resources, for example in science and other more practical subjects, is sometimes a barrier to even better progress. Leaders have started to investigate how good use can be made of contacts with other schools to ensure pupils have the opportunity to benefit from high-quality resources.
- The behaviour of pupils remains a strength of the school. The school's records show that bullying is almost unheard of. However, leaders and other adults are not complacent: wall displays remind pupils where and how bullying might occur. Pupils spoken to by inspectors had a good understanding of different forms of bullying and they were adamant that they knew who to turn to if they thought bullying was an issue. One pupil spoken to by inspectors said 'other pupils don't pick on you and are not judgemental. This adds to the comfort of being here'. Relationships between pupils and adults are exceptional because adults take the time to understand pupils' specific needs. Adults deal sensitively with issues related to pupils' emotional distress so that pupils can begin successfully to build their resilience. Pupils who join the school respond to strong role models of other well-behaved pupils and, as a result, behave well

themselves. Inspectors' observations of behaviour, in lessons and during informal times, indicate that behaviour is typically good.

- Pupils' attendance overall has improved since the last inspection. When appropriate, Key Stage 3 pupils attend on a full-time basis. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Leaders are aware that even more needs to be done in order to ensure pupils who are reluctant to attend school are integrated as quickly as possible into the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and the management committee should ensure that:

- teachers boost pupils' learning even further by providing more opportunities for pupils to deepen their learning in all subjects
- leaders analyse, even more precisely, their tracking information so that gaps in learning between pupils and their peers in mainstream schools are monitored closely and appropriate action is taken if the gaps do not close rapidly enough
- leaders and teachers explore every avenue so that pupils at the school have an equal opportunity to benefit from the same high-quality resources as their peers in mainstream schools
- leaders develop systems to support the rapid integration into the school of pupils who are reluctant to attend.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Management Committee and the Director of Children's Services for Trafford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Drew Crawshaw

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- We held meetings with you, other leaders, several members of the management committee, teachers, a small number of parents, several pupils and a representative of the local authority.
- We observed a selection of lessons across the school, some of them jointly with you.
- We looked at pupils' work during our visits to classrooms. We also scrutinised samples of pupils' written work along with pupils' work displayed on walls around the school.

- We observed behaviour around the school including observing pupils at breaktime, lunchtime and as they arrived at and left school.
- We scrutinised a wide range of documentation provided by the school including: self-evaluation by leaders; the school's development plan; information on attendance; documents used to record behaviour incidents and safeguarding concerns; information relating to pupils' progress; the results of the school's surveys of parents' and pupils' opinions; records of leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning and of performance management; and minutes of meetings of the management committee.
- We took account of 11 responses to the online survey Parent View.