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Nick Donnelly  
Principal  
Voyage Learning Campus  
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Somerset  
BS24 9AX

Dear Mr Donnelly

### **Short inspection of Voyage Learning Campus**

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 2017 with Ofsted Inspector Deirdre Fitzpatrick, 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 November 2013.

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

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

The school provides a service that is valued highly by the local authority, other schools and by parents. Your reputation for significantly improving the life chances of many vulnerable young people in North Somerset is well deserved.

You provide the school with strong leadership across the three centres that make up the provision. You are supported well by other senior leaders, staff and by the management committee. There is clarity of purpose, shared with all staff and with pupils, to prepare all pupils well for their next steps. Your evaluation of what the school is doing well, and in some aspects very well, and what could be improved further is precise and accurate. You and senior colleagues use this well to plan specific training for staff, to maintain and develop their skills further and to ensure that the provision takes full account of current best practice.

The rigorous process that establishes clear expectations for each pupil includes a thorough initial assessment when pupils join the school and a curriculum planned carefully to meet individual needs, and thereby ensures that the school meets its core aim well. Almost all pupils successfully move back to their school, transfer to a

more suitable setting or, for older pupils, progress to an appropriate course in a further education college, employment or an apprenticeship. The large majority of the college courses are at level 2, showing good progression for these pupils.

Each centre provides a calm and purposeful environment where pupils respond well to the high expectations set for them. Pupils value highly the personalised care and attention staff provide. The precise needs of each pupil are established well when they join the school. The high quality of attention given to their individual needs leads to the very large majority making, as appropriate, substantial gains in their attitude, behaviour, attendance, confidence, self-esteem, and social and emotional development. There is an excellent breadth and depth of expertise within the staff that enables them to deal with pupils' individual circumstances well. Strong links lead to effective collaborative work with other specialist services and agencies to support pupils' needs.

The previous inspection report stated that pupils needed be challenged to make more progress. This has been achieved for pupils in all phases, although more markedly for those of primary age, where pupils' progress is strong. However, teachers need to make better use of the gaps in learning identified in the initial assessment to build on what pupils already know, understand and can do. Some older pupils are given work that is too easy or repeats what they can already do. This limits their academic progress.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You, your leadership team and the management committee have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements and records meet statutory requirements and are fit for purpose. Staff training is comprehensive, matched well to the particular circumstances of the school, and effective. Records are detailed and used well to identify any lessons to be learned from any incidents that occur.

Ensuring that pupils are safe and very well looked after is at the heart of everything the school does. All staff are acutely aware of the vulnerability of pupils in each of the centres and do everything they can to ensure their well-being. All staff should take pride in how well they protect pupils and help them to keep themselves free from harm.

An individual risk assessment is a key part of the initial analysis of pupils' needs and circumstances. This is key to planning the provision and support for individual pupils, including the external work experience undertaken by older pupils. Pupils' well-being is monitored continuously and interventions are timely, supportive and effective. Every effort is made to involve parents and carers, often very successfully, to do everything possible to ensure that the care provided in the centres extends beyond the school. The work with external agencies is also key to this.

The effectiveness of the arrangements for safeguarding is monitored carefully by the management committee. Regular reports are provided for the committee. The member of the committee responsible for safeguarding meets frequently with the

overall school safeguarding lead and the designated staff in each centre.

### **Inspection findings**

- The centres are calm and purposeful. Pupils behave well and show respect for each other and for adults. It was a pleasure to talk with them. They often work well together. This is testament to the high quality of the work of your staff, who are very skilful in managing the different behaviours and needs of individual pupils.
- Ambitious, but realistic, expectations are agreed for each pupil when they join the school. These focus sharply on what is needed to prepare each pupil well for their next steps.
- The comprehensive initial assessment leads to a precise analysis of each pupil's particular needs. A well-tailored package of support and teaching is then planned, making very good use of the good range of expertise in the school, and linking well with external services as and when necessary.
- The curriculum has a clear focus on developing pupils' skills in reading, writing, speaking and mathematics. The secondary curriculum includes a range of options to enable pupils to develop specific vocational and other skills to prepare them well for post-16 courses, employment or an apprenticeship. This is supported by relevant work experience. Pupils value this flexibility, respond well and produce excellent work in, for example, art and catering.
- The provision for primary-age pupils is strong. Almost all pupils successfully return to mainstream provision. They are very well prepared for this transition. Pupils make substantial progress in their social and emotional development and in improving their literacy and numeracy skills.
- While secondary-age pupils make substantial gains in their attendance and personal development, there is some variation in their academic progress, particularly in Years 9 to 11. For example, while there is a strong focus on literacy, this work does not always build well on what pupils can already do. In some groups, such as in mathematics, all pupils undertake the same work even though the initial assessment precisely identified what each pupil could already do and not do.

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

Leaders and the management committee should ensure that:

- pupils are given work that builds on what they already know, understand and can do.

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

Yours sincerely

James Sage  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

The Voyage Learning Campus deals with pupils in North Somerset permanently excluded, or at risk of exclusion, as well as others who need short-term placements or school places. The school provides a mix of short- and longer-term placements. Some pupils spend periods of time at the school to help them return to their school or progress to a more suitable setting. Those who join in Years 10 or 11 mostly stay until they leave at age 16. The school is based on three sites, each catering for a particular pupil group: primary-age pupils and those in Years 7 and 8; pupils in Years 9 to 11; and a tuition service for pupils of primary and secondary age who have health and/or medical needs or are waiting for a place in a setting suited to their specialist needs. Pupils in the tuition service spend differing amounts of time in that centre dependent on their particular needs and circumstances.

Inspectors visited the centres for primary and Years 7 and 8 pupils, and for Years 9 to 11 pupils and met staff from the tuition service. Discussions took place with the principal, other senior leaders, teaching and other staff, the chair of the management committee and with pupils in lessons and around the site. Inspectors also reviewed case studies of individual pupils. A range of documents was evaluated, including the school self-evaluation and the analysis of attendance, pupil progress, transfer, destinations and other information.

Inspectors undertook a range of activities to check the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding, including checking documents and talking with pupils, teachers, school leaders and the chair of the management committee.

There were too few responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, or to the online pupil survey to analyse. Account was taken of the views of 22 staff who completed the online survey.

At the start of the inspection, the following lines of enquiry were agreed with the principal and other senior leaders, and later discussed with the chair of the management committee.

How well does the school:

- establish the expected outcomes for each pupil?
- set targets, as appropriate, for gains in literacy and numeracy, progress in other

subjects and pupils' personal development, behaviour, attitudes and attendance?

- prepare pupils for return to their school or transfer to another more suitable setting, or, for Year 11 pupils, progress to post-16 destinations?
- accurately establish starting points for each pupil as they join the school – personal development, emotional, behavioural, 'academic' – what they already know, understand and can do?
- monitor pupils' progress against individual expectations?
- plan a curriculum that meets the needs of each pupil and prepares them well for their next steps?
- use the progress information for each pupil to evaluate the effectiveness of each centre overall?
- achieve these overall outcomes?