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Mrs Wendy Casson  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Casson

### **Short inspection of Educational Diversity**

Following my visit to the school on 3 May 2017 with Bernard Robinson, Ofsted Inspector, 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.

You and your team are passionate in your drive to help some of Blackpool's most vulnerable pupils to succeed. You 'go the extra mile' every day to make sure that these pupils get the help they need, whether on your roll, in mainstream schools or new to Blackpool.

Since the previous inspection, the numbers of pupils on your roll has nearly doubled. You know this is unsustainable. You have taken decisive action to reduce the number of permanent exclusions across Blackpool. Chrysalis, the short-term intervention programme you run, has been highly successful. Last year, only 3% of the pupils who took part were permanently excluded. Almost all of these pupils who were identified at high risk of exclusion improved their behaviour and attendance.

You and your senior leaders have started to capitalise on the learning from this successful intervention programme to help other pupils. You recognise that more needs to be done to help your pupils reintegrate into mainstream schools. This is a challenge. Many of your pupils are reluctant to move on. Educational Diversity is a safe haven for them. Moreover, you will need the support of your senior colleagues in mainstream schools to secure suitable places. However, already you have helped a local secondary school to replicate your programme. You have given them the confidence and expertise to support some of their most-challenging pupils.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified that your assessment procedures needed improvement. You have invested in expert staff and a new information management system. This system has taken time to set up, but is now helping staff and leaders to do their jobs better. A deputy headteacher has introduced a pupil tracking tool to help teachers assess pupils' learning across the curriculum. There are now key dates across the school year for assessment data to be collected and analysed. This is helping leaders to identify patterns and trends more quickly. It also highlights variations in performance between pupils, groups, subjects and centres. You have implemented quality assurance processes to check the reliability of the data. Now that your assessment procedures are well established with English and mathematics, you are rolling them out across all subjects. The expertise of your English and mathematics subject leads, coupled with the assessment champions among your teachers, should stand you in good stead to complete the roll-out successfully.

You have established rigorous and reliable baseline testing which is used to set realistic targets for pupils. This baseline information also enables you to identify any additional learning needs such as speech and language difficulties. You make sure that pupils receive any specialist help they need to overcome these. You now recognise the need to consider pupils' starting points at the end of key stage 1 or 2 when setting targets to ensure that pupils catch up with their peers.

Improving pupils' attendance and punctuality has been a 'hard nut to crack'. However, you have achieved great success with pupils on the short-term intervention programme. Over half of these pupils improved their attendance last year. Most pupils have had considerable periods of disruption to their education prior to attending the school. In most of your learning centres, staff are successful in re-engaging pupils in learning. You have made sure that all pupils have access to full-time education now. Teachers make sure that parents and pupils are in no doubt about the importance of attendance and punctuality. Moreover, you have an extensive reward system to recognise those pupils who attend regularly, as well as those who improve their attendance. You do not shy away from taking legal action against those parents who do not send their children to school regularly. However, you recognise that for some pupils at key stage 4, despite your strong alternative provision offer, the curriculum is not 'hooking them in'. You have convincing plans to transform your key stage 4 offer from September 2017.

There have been considerable changes to the management committee since the previous inspection. Members recognised the need to recruit people with the experience, expertise and skills needed to provide effective support and challenge to you and senior leaders. Members carried out a skills audit to help identify skills gaps. Consequently, a number of new members have been appointed. Moreover, there is a new chair in post. Recently, members made the decision to establish sub-committees. Members anticipate that these sub-committees will help them to provide more effective support and challenge to the school across all aspects of its work. Moreover, members have decided to appoint key link members, including safeguarding and special educational needs and/or disabilities, to work closely with key staff and departments. However, these plans have not yet been actioned, so it

is not possible to measure their success.

Members accept that the rapid growth in pupil numbers presents a considerable challenge and that they need to determine how this will be resolved. They share your concerns that the strain of running a school which has far exceeded its capacity will start to impact negatively on its effectiveness.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders make certain that thorough checks are carried out before staff take up post, so that they are suitable to work with children. There is a comprehensive induction programme for new staff to help them understand their roles and responsibilities. Good communication both within and between the learning centres raises staff awareness of local issues. Staff make sure that pupils are made aware of potential risks and know how to keep themselves safe. Leaders make sure that the school works in partnership with external agencies. Staff and pupils agree that pupils are safe and well cared for.

### **Inspection findings**

- You have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. You are passionate about the school's work but do not try to hide its weaknesses. You want the best for your pupils so are not afraid to make difficult decisions when they are needed.
- At the previous inspection, the inspectors urged you to secure consistency across the different sites. You and your colleagues have worked hard on this. Consistent approaches to curriculum, behaviour, attendance, safeguarding and assessment are visible across the school. This has contributed to the school's continuing improvement since the previous inspection. It is benefiting staff and pupils alike.
- The school plays a pivotal role in the provision for pupils with social, emotional, medical and mental health needs in Blackpool. You have a clear vision of how the school needs to develop if it is to build on its success. You have already made some inroads through your more robust admissions criteria. You have redeployed some of your resources to work in partnership with mainstream schools to prevent pupils being excluded.
- You have done much to improve your curriculum since the previous inspection. You have made sure that you offer a number of different pathways dependent on the needs, interest and aptitudes of your pupils. You make sure that your youngest pupils continue to follow the national curriculum in readiness for a return to mainstream school. Your older pupils can choose from a range of options, whether vocational or academic. Your strength is in how you help pupils to develop the social and emotional skills they need to be successful in education and the workplace. Your insistence on Year 10 pupils getting English and mathematics qualifications under their belts is bearing fruit. Already, nearly half of these pupils have gained an English qualification and almost three quarters have gained a qualification in mathematics.
- Staff enjoy coming to work. They are proud to be a part of Educational Diversity.

You use the appraisal system well to help identify their training needs as well as support them to develop their career plans. They appreciate your willingness to listen to their suggestions and try out their ideas. Staff value the effort that senior leaders make to visit all the different learning centres on a daily basis. Staff appreciate the fact that you not only know all the staff, but also all the pupils. Daily briefings and debriefings make sure that important information is passed on in a timely fashion. Consequently, staff willingly go the extra mile for the school and its pupils.

- There are positive relationships between staff and pupils. This is a strength of the school. Staff know pupils well and help them to succeed. Pupils generally get on well together. Pupils spoke respectfully to inspectors and were confident to talk with them about their learning. Teachers and middle leaders create a positive climate for learning in each of the centres.
- Staff make sure that they keep in touch with parents, sharing successes as well as concerns. The school provides mid-year as well as end-of-year reports to parents to make sure that they know the standards that their child is achieving. You and the management committee accept that the school's website does not provide the wealth of useful information they wish to share with parents in an easily accessible way. Senior leaders and members are frustrated that some information is hard to find and other information is out of date.

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

- Leaders should ensure that they use best practice from the short-term intervention programme to further improve the outcomes for the school's other pupils including behaviour, attendance and reintegration, so that they are well prepared to move on.
- Through their new committee structure and link roles, the management committee should support school leaders, as well as hold them more robustly to account, so that all aspects of the school's performance continue to improve.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the management committee, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Blackpool. 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, teaching and support staff. An inspector met with three members of the management board.
- Inspectors also spoke to a representative of the local authority and the associate principal of a local secondary school.
- Inspectors visited all of the school's sites.
- Two parents responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. An inspector met with one parent.
- An inspector met formally with a group of staff and considered the 56 responses to Ofsted's online survey of staff.
- There were no responses from pupils to Ofsted's online survey, so inspectors spoke formally to a group of pupils as well as informally to pupils during the school day.
- Inspectors visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning. We also observed pupils around the different sites during the school day. We made visits to classrooms with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at information about pupils' progress and attainment, the school's self-evaluation and action plan as well as a range of other documentation.
- Inspectors conducted a full review of safeguarding, including an evaluation of the school's policies and procedures to keep pupils safe, training records, recruitment checks and record-keeping.