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Mr Mike Marshall
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Marshall

Short inspection of Meadow Park School

Following my visit to the school on 13 June 2017 with Paul Edmondson, 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since the previous inspection, the school has moved to new accommodation in Stockbridge Village, so that all pupils can be educated on the same site. The number on roll has grown considerably, particularly in the last 12 months. You have prioritised the pressing need to increase the number of pupils returning to mainstream schools so you can continue to meet the demand for places.

Everyone agrees that you are the driving force behind the school's success. You are held in high regard by pupils, staff, fellow headteachers and the local authority. You lead by example. Every day you make sure that you are a visible presence around school, talking to staff, pupils and parents so that you 'keep your fingers on the pulse'. You are ably supported by your dynamic leadership team. Together, you hold an accurate, honest view of the school's performance, informed by a wealth of evidence. You use this information well to make sure that you secure improvements year on year.

You and your team are highly ambitious for each and every pupil. Yesterday, many of your Year 11 pupils sat their final examinations. For those pupils and their parents, this day seemed unattainable when they joined your school. You and your colleagues transform pupils' lives because you never give up on anyone. As one of your parents told us, 'This school gives all the support needed for vulnerable children to become confident members of society and caring human beings.'

Since the previous inspection, you and your leadership team have improved the quality of teaching across the school. As a result, pupils are making strong progress across the curriculum, from their different starting points. Teaching staff keep a close eye on pupils' progress. You set ambitious targets, making sure that any pupil at risk of falling behind is given the support they need to catch up quickly. A new science teacher, appointed in September 2015, has brought a breath of fresh air to the department. Her infectious enthusiasm has ignited pupils' passion for the subject. Pupils enjoy the frequent opportunities to take part in practical activities. Consequently, pupils' achievement in science has improved considerably and is now in line with other subjects.

The inspectors also asked you to continue to make improvements to pupils' attendance and behaviour. You have worked hard to develop an effective approach to behaviour management. The consistent approach, followed by all adults in school, helps maintain a calm, orderly, learning environment. Any emerging issues are quickly addressed so that lessons can proceed without interruption. Serious incidents are rare. Pupils are highly motivated by the well-considered reward system.

By your own admission, attendance is the school's 'Achilles' heel'. Your dedicated attendance officer and mentor team are relentless in their determination that every pupil will be in school, on time, every day. They work hard with pupils and their families to overcome any barriers to attendance. The vast majority of your pupils join you with a history of poor school attendance. Most make rapid and marked improvements to their attendance. However, there is a small minority of pupils who are hard to engage. Nevertheless, you do not give up with them.

You are an outward-facing school. Both your mentors and therapists offer a wealth of opportunities for pupils and their parents to participate in shared activities. You make sure that families are welcomed into school for formal and informal events. As a school, you willingly offer advice and support to colleagues in schools locally and nationally. You work well with colleagues in the local authority to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils across Knowsley.

There have been a number of changes to the school's management committee since the previous inspection. It has proved difficult to recruit new members. Following a recent audit of skills, members are aware that there are gaps in the committee's experience and expertise. Committee members are keen to make a positive difference to the school. However, they recognise the need for further training and support. Members are determined to provide confident and effective challenge and support to you and your colleagues.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You carry out thorough checks to make sure that staff are suitable to work with children. All staff keep up to date with their training and are aware of the potential risks to your pupils. Your team make sure that they keep meticulous

records, so that nothing is missed. You and your colleagues make sure that you seek advice and guidance from specialist colleagues whenever you have any queries or concerns. You make sure that pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. Pupils report that they feel safe and well cared for. They are confident that any rare incidents of bullying will be nipped in the bud by staff. Any concerns raised by staff, parents or pupils are followed up assiduously by senior leaders.

Inspection findings

- Relationships are key to your school's success. From the first time that families step through your door, you and your colleagues start to form strong and lasting relationships. Many of your pupils come to visit you long after they have moved on. Teachers' willingness to take time to talk through problems and find solutions helps new pupils conform to your high expectations quickly. Everyone takes good care of each other. Friendship ambassadors look after their classmates, senior leaders keep an eye on teachers and support staff. This is a warm, welcoming school where everyone is valued.
- Teachers enthuse your pupils about learning. Teachers plan lessons carefully, taking account of what pupils already know and can do. Teachers choose interesting and exciting activities which interest and engage pupils. They set high standards for pupils and make sure that lessons are suitably challenging. Consequently, pupils are willing to have a go even when tasks are tricky. They work cooperatively with their classmates and take pride in their work.
- You offer a wealth of extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities. Pupils look forward to the residential trips, such as to Askrigg and France. During the inspection, pupils enjoyed the first meeting of the pet club. This group enjoyed learning to care for the school's rabbits and dog. You make sure that you take every opportunity offered to broaden pupils' life experiences. On the way back from a residential trip, you took the pupils to visit a mosque and then to a local restaurant to experience life in a predominantly Pakistani heritage community.
- You have developed a well-considered curriculum that gives your teachers plenty of opportunities to tailor learning to pupils' interests and enthusiasms. You make sure that pupils work towards a range of high-value qualifications. These will stand them in good stead for their return to mainstream school or to move on to education, employment or training. Your team have been tenacious in securing destinations for every one of your Year 11 pupils. Moreover, you make sure you go the extra mile after these pupils leave you. Your mentors support pupils as they move onto their next steps, to make sure that they are settled and secure in their new lives, before saying goodbye.
- You have a loyal and committed team who strive to achieve the best for every pupil and their family. You make sure that they receive the support and training to be the best they can be. The staff who have been promoted both internally and externally are testament to the success of your professional development programme. Staff appreciate the personal and professional support you and the senior leadership team offer them. Consequently, many staff stay at Meadow Park for a long time, reluctant to leave this happy, successful school.

Next steps for the school

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should continue to develop the roles of the management committee so that members offer the highest level of challenge to senior leaders in the school and make a significant impact on the school's performance.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the management committee, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council. 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 two members of the management committee.
- Inspectors also spoke to three representatives of the local authority and the assistant headteacher of a local secondary school.
- Four parents responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. An inspector spoke to three parents by telephone. Inspectors also considered the results of the school's own surveys.
- An inspector spoke to an alternative provider used by the school.
- An inspector met formally with a group of staff and considered the 18 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 and check on their work in books. We made some of these 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.