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Mr Tony Fay
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Fay

Short inspection of Presfield High School and Specialist College

Following my visit to the school on 7 February 2018 with Ann Gill, 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. You are an inspirational leader. Your highly effective senior leadership team has created a culture of ambition which permeates the school community. Staff share your high aspirations to equip pupils with the skills that they need to make a meaningful contribution to society. Highly knowledgeable governors share in this commitment by supporting and challenging school leaders in equal measure.

Leaders celebrate pupils' achievements, academically and socially. Improving GCSE results demonstrate the school's success. Projects such as pupils' visits to speak to primary school pupils to change their perceptions of autistic spectrum disorder are a more poignant reflection of the successful outcomes that pupils achieve. Effective careers guidance in the sixth form builds on students' aspirations and reflects the school's determination to ensure that students have the skills that they need as they move into employment.

Energetic staff, who are genuinely invested in pupils' development, welcome pupils each day. Staff understand pupils and see beyond their difficulties. Staff treat every pupil as an individual. Parents greatly appreciate this. Adults create a calm, controlled learning environment and structure lessons carefully so that pupils focus on their learning.

Your drive for excellence is based on a clear understanding of the school's strengths

and weaknesses. You have taken decisive action in response to the areas for improvement from the last inspection. Leaders hold teachers accountable for pupils' progress through a rigorous system for managing staff performance. You have introduced different levels of challenge for pupils' learning through the broad curriculum you offer. However, we agreed that the most able pupils could be more consistently challenged in their writing and mathematics work to make even better progress. You are aware that teaching assistants provide the highest level of care and pastoral support for pupils. However, we agreed that the difference that they make to pupils' academic progress could be further enhanced.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The commitment of staff to pupils' safety and welfare is exemplary. Staff identify pupils' vulnerabilities in individualised plans to keep them safe from harm. Leaders ensure that clear strategies are in place to support pupils, such as plans for students' independent travel to their work placements. Staff ensure that pupils are gradually introduced to managing risk to ensure that they know how to keep themselves safe. Pupils' work shows a keen awareness of online safety, which is reinforced throughout the school.

Staff and governors have a good awareness of safeguarding issues because of the effective training that they receive. Parents are clear that they feel their children are safe at the school.

Inspection findings

- As part of this inspection we agreed to look at how effectively leaders use the Year 7 catch-up funding to improve outcomes for pupils in English and mathematics. Leaders use this funding to cater for pupils according to their ability and needs. Staff develop clear targets for pupils' learning and social development. Leaders' focus on behaviour for learning in Year 7 means that pupils settle quickly and develop positive attitudes towards their learning. The care and nurture that teaching assistants provide is exceptional. They know and understand pupils and their needs. However, the difference they make to pupils' academic progress is too variable in writing and mathematics.
- We also agreed to look at how effectively leaders promote the progress of the most able pupils in key stages 3 and 4. Teachers pitch pupils' work at a level which enables them to progress well. As a result of the effective teaching pupils receive, the work in their books shows that their progress across a range of subjects is never less than good, and sometimes better. Science is a particularly strong area of the curriculum. The best learning takes place when teachers skilfully question pupils to promote their thinking and deeper learning. However, the work in books shows that the consistency of challenge for the most able pupils in writing and mathematics is too variable across year groups.
- Another key line of enquiry for this inspection was to look at how well the school engages with parents. Leaders are diligent in gathering parents' views and acting upon them to improve the school continuously. Consequently, parents are

overwhelmingly positive about the school. They feel that staff have a deep understanding of autistic spectrum disorder which allows them to see beyond pupils' sometimes challenging behaviour. The parent-support worker is pivotal in engaging with parents to enable pupils' smooth transition into school in Year 7. Parents are appreciative of the support provided by the school. The support worker is a dedicated point of contact for parents. The regular social activities for pupils also allow parents to have informal contact with each other. They feel well informed about their children's progress through regular reviews which establish clear targets and individual plans for pupils' future learning.

- Finally, we agreed to look at how effectively the school promotes pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes. Leaders keep comprehensive records of children's needs. They share these with staff to pre-empt any incidents of challenging behaviour. During break and lunchtimes, staff provide a range of enrichment activities to develop pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Staff share each pupil's social and behavioural targets with their parents. Much work is done with pupils in Year 7 to ensure that behaviour for learning is strong. Records show that staff tackle challenging behaviours effectively so that pupils make outstanding progress over time in managing their own behaviour. There is clear evidence of a reduction in incidents of inappropriate behaviour as pupils mature and move through the school. This is due to the excellent relationships that staff develop with pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils are consistently challenged in their writing and mathematics work across all year groups to achieve even higher standards
- teaching assistants are supported in making a greater difference to pupils' learning and the progress that they make, particularly in writing and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Bentham
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

We met with leaders and governors to discuss safeguarding and aspects of the school's leadership and management. We visited all classes with senior leaders. We reviewed documentation about safeguarding, including the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff. We reviewed behaviour logs and spoke with pupils about behaviour and safety at the school. We watched pupils at breaktime and lunchtime and reviewed arrangements for safeguarding. We conducted a scrutiny of pupils' work from key stages 3 and 4 in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. We heard pupils read as part of their work in lessons. We reviewed documentation, which included pupils' individual plans and targets, governors' minutes, the school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses and the school development plan. We spoke to parents and took into account five responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.