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Mrs Maureen Brettell  
Principal  
Tameside Pupil Referral Service  
Globe Lane  
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Cheshire  
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Dear Mrs Brettell

### **Short inspection of Tameside Pupil Referral Service**

Following my visit to the school on 6 February 2018 with Jane Austin, 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 January 2013.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection.

**There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since your appointment as principal, you have encountered and managed a great deal of change and turbulence across the service. With the support of the local authority and management committee, you have overseen the recruitment of a number of new staff, including new heads of two of the three centres. There have been changes to the membership and structure of the management committee. You have admitted a large number of younger pupils on assessment places so that they can benefit from education, health and care plans (EHCPs). This has placed additional pressure on your available accommodation at this current time. You have recently admitted a large group of Year 10 pupils who have been permanently excluded from their mainstream schools. There are several supply staff employed currently to cover for the absence of full-time teachers.

Nonetheless, you have been determined and resolute in your efforts to ensure that all staff across the provision work collaboratively and in accordance with agreed systems, policies and procedures. You know your school well and have a clear vision and school improvement plan. You and your heads of centres have introduced a service-wide approach to assessing pupils on entry to each of the centres so that you can track and monitor their progress in attendance, behaviour, emotional well-being and learning. Many staff have engaged well with this new approach, but,

according to the staff questionnaire returns, there is a small minority that has found the pace of change difficult. Currently, this is having a negative impact in terms of their full engagement in and contribution to school improvement action planning. You and the management committee are fully aware of this situation and are working hard to move the school forward in a positive direction.

The areas for improvement from the last inspection have been turned into positive action points. For example, most teachers are making better use of assessment information about pupils to plan for their individual needs. Your systems to follow up concerns regarding pupil absence are strong. You are working with the local authority and other agencies to address your concerns about the attendance and behaviour of a particular group of Year 10 pupils. You are linking teachers' appraisal objectives to improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers have developed long-term plans for each subject. There is good evidence to show that pupils' literacy skills are improving because of targeted support for both the less able and the most able pupils. At key stage 4, the most able pupils attain up to four GCSE passes at grades A\* to C, including English, mathematics and science. Less-able pupils achieve accreditation in entry-level subjects, including the Jamie Oliver Home Cooking Skills Award. Most pupils proceed to further education, employment or training when they leave at age 16. Last year three leavers were successful in securing employment in the music industry.

You utilise your key stage 4 provision well to ensure that pupils with additional social, emotional and mental health needs have access to a calm and nurturing environment in 'The Bridge' (an area of the key stage 4 centre set aside for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs). As a result, these pupils' learning, behaviour and attendance are improving. Parents spoken to made comments such as, 'he has come on tremendously' (since attending the centre), 'he is a completely different child', 'his attendance is now close to 100%' and 'he has made progress in mathematics so that he is now at GCSE level'.

You have supported your senior and middle leadership teams towards the promotion of higher-quality teaching, learning and assessment and pupil outcomes across the service. You recognise that there is further work to be done in implementing your school improvement plans for this to have an even greater impact.

Pupils' behaviour is generally good across different sites, especially at key stage 4. Pupils spoken to said that they felt calmer at this school compared to their mainstream schools. They said that staff are approachable and that lessons are interesting and encourage them to learn. It is testimony to the efforts of all staff that the number of fixed-term exclusions over the past 12 months has reduced dramatically, by two thirds. Pupils are encouraged to be tolerant of differences, for example regarding religion, sexuality or gender.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding continues to be effective. All staff have undergone appropriate training to ensure safe handling of pupils if restraint is required. There is a named

member of staff, as well as a named governor, in relation to any safeguarding or child protection concerns. The principal and business manager have undergone safer recruitment training. The management committee have overseen a recent health and safety audit to identify any weaknesses regarding site safety. Inspectors confirmed in their findings that pupils were well cared for and that the three sites are safe and secure. Staff were seen managing occasional incidents during the inspection with care and sensitivity so that pupils were kept safe and with minimal disruption to learning. Recording systems for attendance, behaviour and accidents are efficient and well maintained. The few racist incidents recorded have been followed up well by the management committee. Inspection evidence indicates that there are effective procedures for monitoring the safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and progress of pupils in alternative provision.

### **Inspection findings**

- Most teachers make good use of assessment information on each pupil to plan their lessons. For example, at key stage 3, it was clear that individual pupils were moving on in their learning in reading, writing and spelling from 'novice' to 'expert' level, but at their own pace. Pupils were observed developing their knowledge, skills and understanding about similar-sounding words, such as 'to', 'too' and 'two' to help them to write with greater independence and confidence.
- Teachers use questioning well alongside modelling of how to complete calculations in mathematics lessons in key stage 4. As a result, pupils develop skills in explaining how they go about problem-solving and the processes followed in reaching a solution.
- Pupils across the three sites demonstrate good behaviour for learning and are motivated by an agreed reward system that includes the dispensing of raffle tickets.
- The enriching curriculum encourages pupils to learn with enthusiasm. Staff have developed positive relationships with pupils on each of the sites. Pupils take pride in their efforts and achievements, for example when baking a cake together in food technology lessons. They focus on their learning, even when there has been an incident that briefly disrupts the flow of lessons.
- Pupils benefit from a range of activities on offer that includes construction, hair and beauty, motor mechanics, martial arts, enterprise activities, outdoor activities, art and design, music and physical education (PE). Pupils partake in work experience placements, for example with National Tyres. Some pupils attend alternative provision such as 'W4U', where they develop work-related and independent living skills. Pupils spoken to said that they benefit from these work-related learning sessions. It gives them an advantage when making plans for their next steps after leaving school. A number of pupils in key stage 4 spoke enthusiastically about their aspirations, one or two wanting to join the Army. A recent careers fair held at the key stage 4 site was well attended.
- Teachers ensure that pupils' work efforts are celebrated through colourful displays. Much of this work is assessed so that pupils know what they need to aim for when they sit for examinations.

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good, especially when they feel that what they are learning meets their needs. For example, pupils working on their GCSE artwork know what they are expected to achieve and have developed the skills and self-confidence to attempt challenging tasks in 3D model-making. Staff provide sensitive support and guidance where required.
- Your leadership teams are beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Regular monitoring by the heads of each centre has ensured that most staff plan their lessons based upon a deeper knowledge of the needs of individual pupils. As a result, pupils are attending and engaging more readily in lessons. This is particularly evident at key stage 4. At the key stage 2 and 3 centre there are current concerns about the number of primary-age pupils awaiting assessment for EHCPs. This is placing pressure upon available classroom places. There are a number of supply staff covering staff absence at this site. You and your management committee know that these are issues that will need to be resolved quickly to ensure that the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes are sustained.
- Your plans to engage more with mainstream high schools are already reaping rewards. There is a growing number of pupils at key stages 2 and 3 making successful returns to mainstream education with the support of your staff.
- The management committee is well informed and holds leaders to account through challenging and focused questions. Its role could be further enhanced through more frequent and systematic monitoring of how well agreed policies and procedures are being implemented, for example in ensuring that the single central record is fully updated with staff information in liaison with the local authority.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leadership and management are further developed so that the agreed systems for the assessment and tracking of pupils' progress in learning are embedded fully and positively by all teaching staff
- leaders work with the local authority to ensure quickly that all pupils have equal access to full-time education appropriate to their needs (with particular reference to part-time primary pupils currently awaiting EHCPs)
- the management committee develops an agreed system for more frequent and regular monitoring of how well its agreed policies and procedures are being implemented by school leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

Jon Ashley  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, the team met with you and your two heads of centre. Meetings were held with the chair of governors and with the assistant education director of Tameside. A meeting was also held with the school's careers advisor. Telephone conversations were held with three parents and an inspector spoke with a staff member from an alternative provider, 'W4U'. Informal conversations were held with pupils at the key stage 4 centre. Inspectors conducted joint observations with the heads of two of the centres. They looked at pupils' workbooks, folders and classroom displays. Inspectors observed pupils on arrival to the school, on the school corridors, in the dining areas and on the playgrounds. Inspectors considered a range of documentation, including the school's review of its strengths and areas to develop, the school development plan and information about pupils' ability levels and progress. Inspectors looked at documentation relating to safeguarding, pupil case studies, attendance, behaviour and risk assessment. They considered staff and parent questionnaire survey information, including that from the online questionnaire site and a school-based survey of parental views. There were no responses from Ofsted's survey for pupils or from Parent View.