

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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23 April 2018

Ms Bernice Kostick  
Headteacher  
North Ridge High School  
Alworth Road  
Blackley  
Manchester  
M9 0RP

Dear Ms Kostick

### **Short inspection of North Ridge High School**

Following my visit to the school on 27 March 2018 with Mark Burgess, 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 outstanding in May 2014.

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

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

You have inspired other leaders and the staff team to have a relentless focus upon school improvement, based upon a clear vision for the school. As a result, this is an outward-looking school that is providing outstanding support to other local special and mainstream schools.

You have followed up recommendations from the previous inspection to develop further the school's sixth-form provision. You now have pupils at three off-site bases where they have increased access to vocational learning. You recognise the outstanding work-related provision and learning offered to pupils will be invaluable when shared even further with other local schools and providers.

You, other leaders and governors work in close partnership to review the school's development actions and progress. Subject leaders and heads of key stages produce evaluative reports that feed into and inform whole-school development planning. A range of school policies and procedures are discussed, agreed and then implemented consistently. For example, teaching and support staff adhere closely to the teaching, learning and assessment policies when inspectors visited classrooms across the school's provision. Senior leaders and governors conduct frequent monitoring visits to check on the quality of lessons or other aspects of the school's

provision. Staff regularly reflect upon their work and benefit greatly from the feedback they receive and any follow-up training.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are exceptionally good. They know what is expected of them in terms of their behaviour in lessons. Pupils appreciate the support provided for them by teaching and support staff. They are set clear learning objectives for each lesson in accordance with their needs and abilities. As a result, all groups, including those who are disadvantaged, make good or outstanding progress, not only in English and mathematics, but across different subjects, including personal, social and health education.

The leadership team has worked exceptionally well in developing a coherent system for recording and tracking pupils' progress. You and the staff team look carefully at pupils' progress records and make changes to their individual education plans where needed. You make highly effective use of external moderation and quality assurance reports to confirm that assessments are accurate and the quality of teaching and learning is never less than good.

Pupils, parents and carers are extremely complimentary about the school. Parents spoken with stated, 'I can't speak highly enough of the school', 'amazing progress with reading and writing while at North Ridge', 'one big happy family', 'excellent communication from school'.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors ensure that there are clear and agreed policies, systems and procedures in place for safeguarding and these are all fit for purpose. Appropriate checks are made when recruiting staff to work at the school. Staff and governors benefit from up-to-date training in safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty. As a result, staff have increased awareness about issues such as radicalisation or signs of abuse. Staff spoken with say they raise any concerns at morning briefings and follow an agreed procedure if reporting a definite concern. Pupils spoken with say they are taught and know about the importance of keeping safe online.

Governors have agreed to oversee specific areas so they can report back to the full governing body. For example, the chair of the governing body conducts health and safety walks to check for any possible issues or concerns. Risk assessments are completed and checked to ensure that pupils going off-site are kept safe. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils attending the Cup Cake Café and Clothes Shop at the Abraham Moss Centre are effective. Records are maintained about pupils' attendance and behaviour so that any concerns can be followed up.

Good records are maintained regarding children in need or any child protection issues. Leaders are aware of the most recent local authority safeguarding report findings and seek to address any related concerns, for example when evaluating the school's safeguarding procedures and their impact.

## Inspection findings

- Inspectors considered how well you, the leadership team and the governing body have maintained outstanding standards since the previous inspection. They looked at whether the quality of teaching, learning and assessment had continued to ensure that pupils made good or better progress from their starting points and left school with the necessary skills for adulthood. They explored aspects of pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, especially pupils' attitudes to and engagement in learning.
- The range of policies and procedures agreed by you and the governing body are applied consistently in all aspects of the school's work. You and senior leaders ensure that there is high-quality teaching, learning and assessment and act swiftly to maintain high standards.
- It is clear that leadership at all levels is a great strength of the school. There is an emphasis upon teamwork which is evident in all contexts, especially in lessons. Teaching assistants are highly valued. They benefit from training and are given opportunities to follow a career path within the school. They work extremely well with teacher colleagues so pupils make the best possible progress in their learning, behaviour and other developmental areas.
- Arrangements for staff appraisal are outstanding because leaders ensure that all staff engage in professional and reflective dialogue about their teaching or support roles. Teachers are encouraged to talk about their successes and what they might improve. This leads to agreed action points, which are followed up fully. The impact and positive benefits are then seen in classrooms.
- Governors are from a range of professional backgrounds. They are passionate about the work of the school. Reports and minutes of governing body meetings indicate that governors are very well informed about school improvement. They ask challenging questions, for example about finances, or the headteacher's support for a local school. They have access to a detailed analysis of progress in learning, behaviour and attendance data, both in written form and through staff presentations.
- Leaders have developed exceptional partnerships with local schools, for example, Barlow Hall Primary School, in the development of pupils' reading skills in local secondary schools. Outreach support staff provide training for mainstream schools in meeting the needs of pupils on the autistic spectrum or those who experience attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. You are also personally providing valuable support for a local special school.
- The teaching and support assistants use assessment extremely well to plan for individual needs. Across each key stage, pupils benefit from personal learning objectives. For example, in key stage 3, pupils with differing abilities worked on the same topic, pictograms, but at different levels of difficulty. As a result, all pupils were actively engaged and making progress towards their agreed objectives.
- At each key stage, pupils move towards greater independence, for example in applying their literacy and numeracy skills to everyday situations. This was observed with learners in the sixth form who were demonstrating food

preparation and cooking skills in a school-based lesson. These skills were further developed when students worked with increasing independence and confidence in the Cup Cake Café based at the Abraham Moss Centre.

- A range of work experience placements are provided via the head of sixth form in partnership with the careers adviser. For example, pupils from Year 10 upwards enjoy and benefit from gardening or farm placements at Heaton Park. All leavers go on to further education and training having achieved a range of ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network), AQA (Assessment and Qualifications Alliance) or Entry Level accreditation. The most able move successfully and with independence into the world of work, for example into catering.
- Your analysis of pupils' information about their learning, behaviour, social and communication development is used well by staff teams to inform their planning and support programmes. For example, pupils who display anxiety and become distracted from learning settle in well-managed, supervised time-out areas. A number of pupils have specific behaviour plans. As a result of these strategies, pupils who have complex needs then make improved progress in their learning, as well as their behaviour.
- You provided data to show decreasing trends over three years in the need for physical interventions and non-physical interventions, when managing pupils' behaviour. There have been no fixed-term or permanent exclusions since the previous inspection. The behaviour of pupils observed by inspectors in a range of contexts was exemplary. Pupils are polite, respectful and hard working. Attendance is above the national average for special schools. Any absences are swiftly followed up with parents.
- The school's curriculum is carefully planned and thought out. Pupils take part in a 'production line', for example, in design technology, where they make candles or pottery items as part of an enterprise project. Pupils grow vegetables which are then used to prepare food in cookery lessons. They engage in discussions about healthy food. The school council made the decision to replace daily toast with daily fruit.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school's work. This is recognised by the fact that your school is a Rights Respecting school.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they build further on the work with partnership schools to share and increase best practices, especially in regard to supporting and developing pupils' and students' work-related and vocational skills.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for Manchester. 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, the deputy headteacher, an assistant headteacher and two teaching support staff who run the off-site provision based at the Abraham Moss Centre. A meeting was held with the chair of the governing body and one other governor. Inspectors conducted joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher in school, in the school's Cup Cake Café and the second-hand clothes shop. They looked at pupils' folders, work books, individual education plans and classroom displays. Inspectors observed pupils on arrival from school transport, at breakfast club, departure time and on the school corridors. Inspectors considered a range of documentation, including the school's external consultant's recent report, the school's review of its strengths and areas to develop, the school development plan, school policies relating to teaching and learning and information about pupils' ability levels and progress. Inspectors looked at documentation relating to safeguarding, including safe recruitment of staff and risk assessments. They considered staff, pupil and parental questionnaire surveys, and Parent View, the online questionnaire. An inspector held conversations with three parents on site.