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Mrs Janine McCann  
Principal  
Stockport Academy  
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Dear Mrs McCann

### **Short inspection of Stockport Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 3 October 2018 with David Hampson, 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 2015.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment in 2016, you have brought together a strong leadership team. Leaders share your vision to improve pupils' aspirations so that pupils strive to be the best. You and your leaders have successfully challenged teachers to raise their expectations of pupils. You create many opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills. This gives pupils a sense of achievement as well as improving their self-esteem and confidence. For example, 'sports leaders' recently organised a successful celebrity football match. This helped to raise money for a local charity.

You ensure that standards are high. Pupils make good progress at key stage 4. However, recently, the progress of disadvantaged pupils has fallen and is now slightly below the progress of other pupils nationally. Leaders' assessment information shows that current pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make good progress. Relationships between pupils and teachers are typically strong and pupils trust teachers to help them to improve their work. For example, Year 11 pupils told inspectors that the extra support that teachers provide helps them to prepare for their GCSE examinations.

At the last inspection, inspectors asked you to improve pupils' progress by ensuring that teachers used assessment information to target learning towards those areas where pupils are having difficulty. You have improved the systems to monitor pupils' progress. This allows teachers to identify easily those areas where individual pupils

need help. The changes you have made to the curriculum gives teachers time to work with pupils to help them to improve their learning in these identified areas. As a result, pupils' progress is improving across all year groups.

Inspectors had also asked you to improve literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. You ensure that teachers receive training to develop pupils' literacy skills across all subjects. For example, teachers provide pupils with a list of key vocabulary to help pupils to understand the meaning of subject-specific words. Teachers particularly focus on words such as 'evaluate', which can have different meanings in different subjects. Work in pupils' books shows that this is improving the quality of their explanations. For example, in geography, pupils used the technical words relating to erosion to great effect in their descriptions of how waterfalls, gorges and oxbow lakes are formed.

Pupils' progress in mathematics has improved since the last inspection. You have appointed a new curriculum leader for mathematics and supported teachers in improving their teaching. Opportunities for pupils to develop numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics have not been developed as well as for literacy. However, when given the opportunity, pupils are able to apply their mathematical skills in other lessons.

In recent years, you have introduced an extensive reading programme for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. This is encouraging pupils to read regularly in school and at home. Pupils who join the school with reading skills below age-related expectations receive lots of support. Last year, all the pupils that received this additional support made good progress in their reading skills.

Parents and carers are happy with the school and feel that their children are safe and well looked after. Parents report that pupils are well behaved, and that any bullying is dealt with effectively. Parents consider the school to be well led and they feel well informed about their children's progress.

Staff are proud to be part of the school community. They think that the school has improved since the last inspection. They are highly motivated because they feel valued. Staff appreciate the professional development opportunities available to them, both in school and across the trust. Staff explained to inspectors how leaders support them to manage behaviour effectively.

Governance is strong. The trust works closely with the local governing body to stringently hold you to account. A representative from the trust visits the school regularly and reports of his visit are sent to the governing body. The trust supports the members of the governing body in their role, and governors benefit from regular training. Governors are knowledgeable and understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school. As a result, they challenge you appropriately and work with you to drive improvement.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

Together with your leadership team, you have created a culture of safeguarding across the school. You ensure that all appropriate steps are in place to check that adults at the school are safe to work with children. You and your leaders update the safeguarding policy annually and provide regular safeguarding training to all staff. Consequently, staff know what to do if they have concerns about a pupil.

Pupils told us that they know how to keep themselves safe. They explained that there are days set aside for pupils to learn about how they can keep themselves safe and healthy. For example, pupils learn about mental health, healthy relationships and anti-social behaviour as well as celebrating diversity in 'Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Week'. Pupils explained to inspectors how incidents of bullying are rare in school and teachers deal with them appropriately.

You ensure that pupils who attend alternative provision are safe. You check their progress and attendance through regular contact. Pupils are appropriately reintegrated back to the school when they are ready to return.

## **Inspection findings**

- Inspectors were interested in finding out more about the school's GCSE examination results. Although these continue to be good, there has been a slight decline over recent years. Inspectors were keen to discover the reasons for this. You explained to me that changes to the GCSE qualifications mean that some qualifications in which pupils previously achieved well are no longer available. Pupils did not achieve as well in the alternative qualifications that they entered. As a result, pupils' overall progress at key stage 4 decreased in 2017. Changes to the options process, together with improvements in teaching, have led to the good results in 2018.
- Inspectors were also interested in the actions that you have taken to improve pupils' progress. Together with your leadership team, you have identified key areas of teaching that need to improve. You have improved the overall quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers benefit from support and training. This has had a positive effect. For example, in mathematics and history, pupils are now making more progress because of the good teaching that they receive.
- Inspectors wanted to know whether attendance was improving, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. You have strengthened the processes to monitor pupils' attendance. Leaders respond promptly when a pupil is absent from school. Two outreach workers visit absent pupils' homes and provide help, support and transport into school so that pupils' learning is not interrupted. This has had a marked improvement on pupils' rates of attendance. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance has moved closer to the national average for all pupils.
- Inspectors had some concerns about exclusions from school, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Together with your behaviour team, you have worked hard to help pupils to manage their own behaviour. Your positive behaviour mentor uses local support services to help those pupils that struggle to maintain the high

standards that you expect. As a result, pupils' behaviour has improved significantly. The proportion of pupils excluded from school is decreasing for all groups of pupils. However, there is still work to do to ensure that this is in line with the national average.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers use assessment more effectively to plan activities to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils and move their progress closer to the progress of other pupils nationally
- they further reduce the proportion of pupils excluded for a fixed period.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Stockport. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Erica Sharman  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, we examined a range of documents, including safeguarding records and policies, information on pupils' performance and attendance, and the school's action plans and leaders' self-evaluation.

We met with you and the executive principal, as well as other members of your leadership team. I met with the chair of the governing body and the regional director of the trust.

We observed lessons with school leaders in several subject areas and looked at work in pupils' books. We spoke formally to groups of pupils from Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 and informally to others around the school. We observed pupils' behaviour both in and out of lessons.

We reviewed the 92 responses to the pupil survey and the 89 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. We considered the 50 responses that parents submitted to the free-text facility and considered the 82 responses to the staff questionnaire.