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Mrs Sue Allen
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Dear Mrs Allen

Short inspection of Oakfield High School and College

Following my visit to the school on 16 October 2018 with Cole Andrew, 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 lead by example to ensure that staff are highly ambitious for pupils. As a result, there is a shared determination to provide pupils with the best possible education. To this end, empowered staff seek out the best practice elsewhere and refine their teaching to the benefit of pupils' learning. Consequently, the quality of teaching is going from strength to strength.

Pupils' best interests are at the heart of everything that you do. When pupils join the school, staff foster effective and supportive relationships quickly. Teachers help pupils to build their self-confidence. As a result, pupils respond positively to ambitious targets. A comment from a pupil typifies this: 'I grew up quickly when I started here. Now I am able to learn at a higher level.' An overarching culture of high aspirations and ambition permeates the school. This means that pupils are keen to do their very best and staff are committed to providing an excellent quality of education. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are highly positive and supportive of the school. Nonetheless, there are a small minority of parents who do not feel that they are well informed about the progress that their children make.

Your school motto is 'Learning today for our tomorrow'. This reflects your determination to prepare pupils well for their next steps. Staff are equally determined. For example, they work to ensure that, where possible, pupils can attend mainstream colleges when they leave the school. You provide a personalised and bespoke curriculum that is tailored carefully to pupils' needs. To this end, you design the curriculum to ensure that, where

appropriate, pupils study a wide range of academic subjects. This means that they have access to a broad variety of opportunities when they leave the school.

At the previous inspection, inspectors asked you to make sure that teachers matched work carefully to pupils' literacy skills. You have addressed this successfully by ensuring that staff benefit from relevant training. As a result, they have a better understanding of pupils' reading and writing skills. This allows teachers to plan learning that better meets pupils' needs. You have also worked to raise the profile of reading. For example, recent work with a local author has encouraged more pupils to read for pleasure. They now enjoy reading widely and often. This is having a positive effect on their reading skills. Inspectors also asked you to ensure that teachers give pupils clear expectations for their learning. Pupils now play a key role in helping leaders to develop the curriculum. This gives them greater ownership of what they are learning and why. As a result, they understand what teachers expect of them. Finally, inspectors asked staff to record students' learning quickly and efficiently so that evidence of progress is not lost. One of the ways you have done this is by investing in a software package that can capture learning in a range of ways and create a timeline of progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding procedures are robust and fit for purpose. You carry out checks to ensure that staff and governors are suitable to work with vulnerable pupils. Leaders maintain high-quality, detailed records of these checks. The safeguarding and welfare of pupils are high priorities for all staff.

Your pastoral leaders are well trained. They have created a culture that places safeguarding at the heart of the school's work. You provide safeguarding training to ensure that all staff know their responsibilities in this area.

The leadership team's approach to promoting e-safety is thorough and far-reaching. Pupils' internet usage at school is closely monitored and pupils are taught how to stay safe online. Consequently, your school has achieved external accreditation for its work on e-safety.

Inspection findings

- I wanted to know about pupils' rates of attendance. This is because, in the past, the proportion of pupils who were regularly absent from school was above the national average. Although attendance figures remain below national averages, most pupils attend school regularly. The school's overall average remains low because of those pupils who, of necessity, have higher levels of absence because of their medical needs. You understand the reasons why these pupils are absent from school and you do all that you can to ensure that they attend regularly. You have robust systems in place to ensure that those pupils who are absent from school are safe.
- The pastoral team has fostered effective relationships with parents. This means that those pupils who are regularly absent from school are extremely well supported and, therefore, they make good progress.
- I was also interested to know more about pupils' outcomes at key stage 4. You place

a strong emphasis on giving your pupils the opportunity to sit GCSE examinations if this is in their best interests. Their GCSE results show that this is a successful strategy for many. It also gives pupils access to mainstream colleges. Provisional information for key stage 4 in 2018 shows that many of your pupils gained valuable GCSE qualifications that prepare them well for the next stage in their education.

- Given the number of vacancies on the governing body, I was interested to know whether governors are effective in holding leaders to account. In discussions with governors it was clear that despite the vacancies the governors are effective.
- Through well-established links, governors know the school very well. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and the areas for development. This enables them to challenge school leaders appropriately. For example, they were able to speak in detail about the progress that pupils make and describe the actions you have taken to support those who fall behind. By challenging leaders effectively, the governing body ensures that actions are effective in maintaining an outstanding quality of education.
- Leaders do not shy away from seeking the views of parents and they do this through surveys, questionnaires and parents' evenings. The vast majority of parents are very happy with the school. They appreciate the quality of education that their children receive. However, a small number expressed some concerns during the inspection. These concerns relate to the progress that their children are making and also to the quality of communication about progress between the school and parents.
- We gathered evidence through visits to classes, focused checks on pupils' work and scrutiny of the school's progress-monitoring systems. These showed that the overwhelming majority of pupils make extremely strong progress from their different starting points. This is because of high-quality teaching and a curriculum that is tailored to pupils' individual needs. Nonetheless, there is work to do to ensure that some parents feel better informed about the progress that their children are making.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- communication with parents improves so that they feel well informed and confident about their child's progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Burgess
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you and other leaders. An inspector also met with two members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.

Inspectors met formally with a group of pupils and spoke with pupils informally at social times. An inspector also met formally with a group of staff.

Leaders accompanied inspectors on visits to classrooms, where they observed teaching and learning across a range of subjects. They also looked at pupils' work across the school.

Inspectors examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding. They also scrutinised a range of policies and leaders' school improvement plan and self-evaluation. Inspectors also checked on the school's website.

Inspectors considered the responses of 29 parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, along with free-text comments and some telephone calls made to Ofsted during the inspection. They also took account of 41 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 15 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.