

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



7 March 2019

Mrs Louise Leader
Headteacher
Pathways Learning Centre
Overndale Road
Downend
Bristol
South Gloucestershire
BS16 2RQ

Dear Mrs Leader

Short inspection of Pathways Learning Centre

Following my visit to the school on 28 February 2019 with Deirdre Fitzpatrick, 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 October 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You are determined to ensure that the values of the school, 'relationships, respect, empathy and perseverance', are the ingredients of success for pupils and staff. This is because you want all pupils to overcome their individual barriers to learning and achieve highly. Staff work together closely, and support and challenge each other well to meet your high expectations.

Strong relationships underpin all aspects of the school's work. Pupils join your school throughout the year, stay for varying lengths of time and arrive with a range of special educational needs. Often, they have had very negative experiences of education. From the outset, staff set out to understand each pupil and show empathy with the challenges that they have faced. They take time to get to know individuals and find ways to help them take important next steps in their learning. One parent said, 'They know my child inside out.' Staff and pupils demonstrate respect for each other. Pupils learn to accept and overcome the challenges that they face and persevere to work towards rightly ambitious goals. Ongoing, individual

careers support is very effective in enabling pupils to make the right choices, realise that they have the potential to achieve well, and apply themselves to their learning. Consequently, pupils of all ages make strong progress in English and mathematics and almost all of them continue into suitable further education, employment or training when they leave the school.

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to develop a wider range of individual programmes to enable pupils to be better prepared for their working lives. Leaders have made a number of changes to pupils' individual provision and keep this under regular review to ensure that it continues to meet their needs. The alternative provision coordinator keeps a close eye on pupils' safety, attendance and experiences when they attend other settings. However, there is more work to do to ensure that pupils are supported to achieve well and work towards suitable qualifications when learning at alternative providers.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff use their detailed knowledge of each pupil and strong relationships to keep a close eye on their safety and welfare. They know what to do if they have concerns and take appropriate actions to safeguard pupils whenever they need to. Leaders provide relevant information and training to staff. Pupils are also informed and taught to make safe choices such as developing healthy relationships. Pupils, parents and staff say that bullying is very rare. This is because staff set high expectations for pupils' behaviour and implement agreed approaches consistently so that pupils develop empathy and respect for each other.

The designated safeguarding leaders have put pupils' welfare at the centre of the school's work. Working closely with the management committee, they check the quality of their systems to keep pupils safe and make further improvements. As a result of this close oversight, safeguarding policies and procedures, such as recruitment checks, are fit for purpose. Leaders also look closely at each pupil's attendance and take effective action to help pupils reduce their rates of absence significantly.

Inspection findings

- Together, we agreed some areas to look at during the inspection. One of these areas was to look at the impact of work to support pupils moving back into mainstream schools. The transition advisers have established strong relationships with these schools. They use their detailed knowledge of pupils' needs and the best approaches to support pupils to succeed and provide schools with timely advice. They also equip parents with the right skills to help their children thrive in the new setting. Consequently, there have been fewer exclusions and almost all pupils have reintegrated successfully into their new schools.
- We also considered whether arrangements for teaching and learning enable pupils to achieve good or better outcomes. Senior leaders know what makes effective teaching and learning. They are ambitious for pupils and staff. They make good use of information that they gather about teaching and evidence of

pupils' learning. They challenge and support staff to refine their approaches so that pupils achieve more.

- Teaching is matched closely to pupils' individual learning needs. Tasks are suitably demanding for pupils. Staff use their excellent relationships with pupils to identify barriers to their learning during lessons. They make the right changes at the right time so that pupils' progress is not disrupted. Staff also support pupils to remain focused on their work and persevere. As a result, pupils make at least good progress across the curriculum and in their social and emotional development.
- Finally, we looked at how leaders are working together to improve the school. Your leadership is very effective. Leaders at all levels share and act on your prominent and rightly ambitious aims to secure a successful future for each pupil. Everyone knows that this includes a strong emphasis on academic achievement because you communicate your expectations very well. Improvement plans are appropriate, challenging and built on a clear understanding of the school's effectiveness. The management committee provides very effective challenge and support to leaders to ensure that these plans are on track and have the desired impact. Members of the committee know the school well and can demonstrate the positive outcomes of this work with clarity and precision.
- Senior and middle leaders are open, honest and think carefully about ways that they can refine and sharpen their work. They are committed to ensuring that the school goes from strength to strength. For example, the home tuition coordinator is involving the home tutors in further developing the quality of teaching and learning in the service. However, leaders do not always demonstrate the impact of their work robustly, particularly middle leaders. Some middle leaders are continuing to find ways to show how pupils' outcomes have improved as a result of their work. Senior leaders recognise that there is more to do to demonstrate the effectiveness of the school to the wider community.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- plans to ensure that pupils at alternative provision achieve appropriate academic outcomes are embedded
- leaders at all levels demonstrate the impact of their work fully.

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

Yours sincerely

Caroline Dulon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with senior leaders, middle leaders, staff and members of the management committee. They also spoke on the telephone to alternative providers, a representative of the local authority and four parents. Together with leaders, inspectors visited classes to observe learning, look at pupils' books and speak to them about their school. Inspectors looked at range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding. They took into account 19 responses to Parent View, including free-text comments, and 27 responses to the staff questionnaire.