

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Jamie Jardine
Executive Principal
The Prescott School
Knowsley Park Lane
Prescot
Liverpool
Merseyside
L34 3NB

Dear Mr Jardine

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Prescott School

Following my visit with Stephen Ruddy, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 11 and 12 September 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in March 2019.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in March 2019

- Ensure that senior leaders, including governors and trustees, provide effective leadership and improve the quality of education at the school by:
 - designing a curriculum that enables all pupils to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills, make the best possible progress and achieve their academic potential
 - making decisions about the curriculum that are based on sound educational rationale
 - making sure that all subject leaders have the necessary skills and expertise to lead their respective areas effectively
 - ensuring that there is strong strategic leadership of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by making sure that all teachers:
 - have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve
 - insist that pupils, particularly boys, complete their work and take pride in its presentation
 - provide the right level of challenge for their pupils, particularly for the most and the least able
 - sequence learning in a way that enables pupils to make links with and build on what they already know
 - use questioning effectively to resolve misconceptions and deepen pupils' understanding.
- Rapidly improve outcomes by ensuring that pupils in all year groups, particularly those who are disadvantaged and those with SEND, make good progress in all subjects, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that:
 - more pupils attend school regularly, particularly those with SEND and those who are disadvantaged
 - the correct attendance code is used for all pupils who attend off-site alternative provision
 - the number of fixed-term exclusions, particularly of disadvantaged pupils, continues to decrease
 - staff use the behaviour management system effectively so pupils do not have their learning disrupted by poor behaviour in their lessons
 - all pupils benefit from a high-quality programme and effective teaching in

personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 11 to 12 September 2019

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive principal, head of school, other senior leaders, a group of subject leaders and a group of teaching staff. The lead inspector met with five members of the local governing body and the chair and the chief executive officer (CEO) of the Heath Family multi-academy trust. He also had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority and the school improvement adviser.

Inspectors made short visits to a range of lessons and looked at pupils' work. Many of these visits were made jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors spoke to pupils when they visited classrooms. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school, at break, at lunchtime and in classrooms, and visited the internal isolation room. Inspectors also met formally with three groups of pupils from a range of year groups to discuss their views of the school. The opinions of parents and carers were considered through the 17 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.

Context

Since his appointment in September 2018, the executive principal has been sharing his time between the Prescott School and the Heath School, which is another secondary school in the multi-academy trust. However, more recently he is spending the majority of his time at the Prescott School. The roles of the senior leadership team have been reviewed and strengthened by the appointment of a director of English and science. Both have whole-school responsibilities in addition to strategic line management of their respective subjects. Three pastoral leaders have been seconded to the senior leadership team in order to develop their leadership skills and to add more leadership capacity. A new head of mathematics has been appointed. Two additional members of staff have been appointed to increase the capacity of the attendance team. Four teachers have left the school and eight teachers have joined. The school is fully staffed.

The progress made by the school in tackling the key areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection

There are early signs that senior leaders and governors are having a positive impact on the quality of education across the school. Leaders have reviewed the curriculum to ensure that all pupils develop their knowledge, understanding and skills over time. Subject leaders have revised schemes of work so that pupils learn new knowledge in a sensible order and make links with and build on what they already know. However, leaders acknowledge that the curriculum is not as well planned in some subjects as it ought to be.

Early entry for GCSE examinations has ceased and pupils are given more choice in

their GCSE options, particularly about whether to study a modern foreign language. Consequently, the proportion of pupils taking the English Baccalaureate in Year 9 is higher compared to the numbers being entered for this suite of qualifications in Year 10 and 11.

Leaders have made changes to the school timetable. For example, they have reduced the duration of lessons from two hours to one hour and created split lunches for different year groups. Pupils are pleased about these changes. They said that the queues for lunch are now shorter and they have more time to eat with their friends.

Leaders have changed the length of the key stage 3 curriculum from two to three years from this academic year. This means that current Year 8 pupils will continue to study their key stage 3 curriculum into Year 9 before they start choosing their options. Leaders believe that this will give pupils an opportunity to study a broader range of subjects and provide them with a better foundation on which to study GCSE subjects.

Leaders have developed and communicated clear expectations for both pupils and teachers. Teachers now have information readily available which shows them the different needs of the pupils in their classes. Some teachers are using this information well to plan activities that match pupils' needs and abilities more closely than in the past. However, there are times when work is not challenging enough for the most able and too difficult for the least able pupils. Some teachers accept work that is incomplete or poorly presented, especially from boys. They do not tackle this well enough. Some teachers use questioning well to make pupils think more deeply about their work and clear misconceptions.

Provisional examination results for 2019 indicate that Year 11 pupils made better progress than in the past. However, there is still much to do to ensure that pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and those with SEND, achieve as well as they can, in all subjects, and particularly in English, mathematics and science.

Most Year 11 pupils who left in 2019 secured appropriate places in education, training or employment.

Pupils are offered a wider range of enrichment activities after school. These activities support their personal development. They particularly value opportunities to participate in sport, drama and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. These experiences help them to develop confidence and resilience.

Pupils are no longer taken out of PSHE lessons for other subjects. Leaders have revised the PSHE curriculum. They have added five 'learning for life days' to the curriculum for 2019/20. These additional PSHE sessions include topics to raise pupils' awareness of the dangers of knife crime, racism and gang culture. Leaders recognise that they do not yet have a clear picture of the quality of the PSHE

curriculum.

Leaders have ensured that there is greater consistency in applying the behaviour management system in lessons. Pupils and staff say that behaviour has improved since the previous inspection. The vast majority of pupils arrive to lessons on time. Across a range of subjects, the behaviour of pupils in most lessons is positive. Pupils respect each other and their teachers. They listen carefully and contribute well when required. However, where learning is less effective a small minority of pupils lose concentration. In these cases, teachers generally pick up on this and use the school behaviour policy to get pupils back on track.

Behaviour is calm and orderly in the dining hall, during break and lunchtimes. Pupils move sensibly during lesson changeovers and get on well with each other during lessons and in unstructured times. However, inspectors noticed some boisterous behaviour outside the school buildings during breaktimes.

In recent years, fixed-term exclusion rates have been higher than the national average. However, the improvement in pupils' behaviour has led to a fall in the number of fixed-term exclusions, including for disadvantaged pupils.

The attendance team have improved systems to monitor rates of attendance. Pupils' attendance, although still below the national average, is improving, including for those pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged. Leaders and staff work more closely with parents to follow up pupils' absences. As a result, persistent absence, although well above the national average, has reduced.

Leaders ensure that the correct attendance code is used for all pupils who attend off-site alternative provision. The proportion of pupils attending external alternative provision has reduced significantly since the last inspection.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The executive principal is well supported by the head of school, senior leaders and governors. They are determined to create an ambitious and inclusive culture within the school.

The trust's action plan addresses the key areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Actions are underpinned by clear timescales and success criteria to measure the full impact of leaders' work. Leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

Leaders have built positive relationships with staff and are realistic about the pressures on them in terms of workload. Teachers feel well supported and appreciate opportunities to support their own well-being. They are fully committed to the vision of the school and staff morale is improving. Teachers are receiving subject-specific support from the Heath School and the Shaw Trust. This is helping

to develop teachers' subject knowledge and build their confidence.

Subject leaders are taking increasing responsibility for checking teaching and learning in their respective areas through lesson visits and scrutiny of pupils' books. Subject leaders are keen to continue to improve their practice.

The school's approach to safeguarding pupils remains effective. Record-keeping is thorough. Recruitment checks on staff's suitability to work with children are complete. Staff receive regular safeguarding training. They understand how to raise a concern about an individual pupil's safety. Leaders work effectively with external agencies and make swift referrals where necessary.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school. They said that bullying is rare. Most pupils expressed confidence in staff to deal with bullying or any other problem they might have. Pupils say they are taught to look after themselves and others.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The newly formed senior leadership team is committed to improving the school. Leaders are increasingly strategic in their thinking and actions. Underperformance is being tackled and confidence in the school is growing.
- Governors and trustees want the best for the school. They understand their roles and fulfil their statutory duties, for example in relation to safeguarding. Governors, trustees and the CEO use their wide range of knowledge and experience to offer effective support and challenge to leaders. The trust has recently appointed a trust-wide director for teaching and learning to work alongside teachers to develop their skills further.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Leaders have recently implemented ways to meet the needs of pupils with SEND more effectively. For example, leaders have provided teachers with more helpful information about pupils with SEND, such as a 'one-page profile' and suggested classroom strategies to meet these pupils' needs. However, the progress of these pupils is not monitored effectively.
- The leadership of the use of the pupil premium funding is not sharp enough. Leaders are aware that addressing this area of the school's work is a key priority. A review of the school's use of pupil premium by a national leader of education is planned for later this term.

External support

Following the last inspection, the trust moved quickly to secure external support for the school. The Shaw Trust is providing effective support, particularly in relation to curriculum development, teaching and learning and leadership training for senior and middle leaders. The Peninsular Trust is providing useful support to reduce pupils' absence.

The school maintains a positive working relationship with the local authority. The trust has commissioned the local authority's adviser to provide external reviews of various aspects of the school's provision, such as literacy. During 2018/19, the school was part of a project called 'Pathways to Success'. The project, which was funded by the Department for Education, has had particular impact in helping leaders to redesign the school curriculum and improve attendance.