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Jamie Jardine
Executive Principal
The Prescott School
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Dear Mr Jardine

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of The Prescott School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on Tuesday 20 June 2023, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and took place because the school received the judgement of requires improvement at its previous graded (section 5) inspection.

During the inspection, I met with you, the head of school and other senior leaders. I also met with groups of subject leaders, staff and pupils. I spoke with representatives of those responsible for governance, representatives of the multi-academy trust and representatives of Knowsley local authority to discuss the actions taken since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I evaluated recent developments to the school's curriculum. I also considered records of safeguarding and records of pupils' attendance. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

The Prescott School continues to require improvement. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- quickly reduce rates of pupils' absence so that more pupils benefit from the education on offer and the provision for their personal development.

Main findings

Since the most recent graded inspection, two senior leaders have left the school and two have joined. A further two associate assistant principals have been appointed to add further capacity to the senior leadership team. Five governors have left the local governing body (LGB) and four have joined. During this time, 12 teachers have left the school and 16 have joined.

You, and other leaders have an astute understanding of the weaknesses in the quality of education, pupils' behaviour and careers education at the school. You have accepted the findings from the most recent inspection and set about remedying the identified shortcomings. Across all areas, you have devised appropriate strategies and well-focused plans. These are successfully helping all leaders and staff to work together towards the same ambitious goals.

You have ensured that trust leaders and members of the LGB understand the key priorities to bring about improvement. Governors and trustees support and challenge you and other leaders effectively on your actions and the impact that your work is having on pupils' experiences at the school. This is helping leaders to courageously tackle some long-standing barriers that have previously impeded improvement.

You are conscious of the need to support other leaders and staff. You have increased the number of staff to reduce and better manage their workload. You have allocated appropriate dedicated time for staff to work on key priorities. You and other leaders provide effective opportunities for staff to keep you informed of their training needs.

Subject leaders and teachers have been supported well to improve their curriculum thinking. They have benefited from training that has helped them to understand your expectations of curriculum design in the long, medium and short term. This has ensured that staff have a better understanding of the specific content they should teach and the order in which pupils will learn new knowledge. Staff feel more confident about their subject knowledge and how different topics are connected. Increasingly, pupils feel that teachers introduce and explain ideas that help them to know and remember more.

Leaders have strengthened the systems to ensure that all staff across the school have a more accurate picture of the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff have been supported to better understand the different types of pupils' needs and to develop practical approaches to supporting these pupils in lessons. Staff feel more confident to adapt teaching strategies to meet the needs of those with SEND. Pupils have noticed that teachers are getting better at providing support to individuals through different explanations, modelling or breaking down the activities that pupils do. That said, this practice remains uneven between classes and subjects. This is because some staff are still learning how to make best use of assessment information to shape the support that individual pupils need to access learning.

Staff use appropriate assessments strategies to identify the specific needs of pupils who are at the earliest stages of learning to read. Suitably trained staff make effective use of this information to support pupils' phonic, fluency and comprehension knowledge. This is helping more pupils to overcome gaps in their reading knowledge. Nonetheless, some pupils still struggle to read with ease or confidence. You have suitable plans to work with staff to refine your new approaches further to help all pupils to catch up.

Leaders have established and shared new expectations and systems to promote better behaviour in lessons and around school. Staff feel well supported by these new approaches. They said that they feel more confident to manage pupils' behaviour, including challenging behaviour, than they did in the past. As a result, staff believe that pupils are much calmer and are developing increasingly positive attitudes to school. Pupils agree. Staff's higher expectations are helping more pupils to behave well and to show respect to others.

Leaders have introduced a wide range of well-considered opportunities to strengthen the careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) of pupils in Years 7 to 9. Pupils appreciate the greater number of opportunities that they are getting to explore their next steps in education or employment through subject lessons and wider whole-school events. You have also strengthened your checks on the range and quality of this CEIAG provision. As a result, you have appropriate and well-informed strategies to further strengthen the opportunities that pupils get to engage with employers.

Leaders recognise that rates of pupils' absence are high. You have strengthened the systems to promote attendance. You are also making better use of your internal information to target those pupils whose attendance is not good enough. You have appointed more staff to add capacity to the attendance management team. Staff are strengthening the support for pupils. They are systematically reminding pupils about the importance of good attendance while also focusing their support on the specific reasons why some pupils do not attend. This work is beginning to reduce the overall absence rates across the school and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent. However, for some pupils these improvements are still too small and too slow.

Leaders have made effective use of the support that has been provided. For example, leaders have used the support from the trust to set, share and implement a new approach to managing behaviour. Those leaders who support reading have used the support from the trust to build systems to identify gaps in pupils' reading knowledge. Finally, subject leaders and teachers have benefited from the trust's guidance on designing effective curriculums across key stages 3 and 4.

Leaders have also made effective use of the support available beyond the trust. For example, you have embraced the help from other local trusts to improve the support provided to early readers and to strengthen staff's subject knowledge.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of the Heath Family Trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the

director of children's services for Knowsley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Pennington
His Majesty's Inspector