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Ms Lynda Thompson
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Dear Ms Lynda Thompson

Short inspection of Trafford Medical Education Service

Following my visit to the school on 2 July 2019 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 good in November 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders and governors have worked tirelessly to improve the educational experiences for the pupils in the school. The curriculum offer has widened so that pupils have the same opportunities that their peers have. The focused drive to improve the quality of teaching has had a strong impact on raising standards and, consequently, improving outcomes for pupils.

Pupils, parents and carers appreciate the work of the school. This is a welcoming, friendly school, where every pupil is valued for the unique individual that they are. The pastoral support that pupils receive works very well. A result of this is that pupils' confidence and belief in their ability strengthens. On entry to the school, the majority of pupils have had periods out of mainstream school and poor attendance. Through a supportive, caring approach, pupils gain in self-esteem so that they begin to enjoy school, attend and thrive.

One parent summed up the views of many: 'My child has made amazing progress. The caring and nurturing staff are all so friendly and easy to approach. I would highly recommend this school to anyone.' Parents said that their children were safe in school and that they had gained in confidence because the staff understand their needs so well.

Since the last inspection, leaders have implemented a bespoke system to be able to track the progress of pupils across a range of subjects. This system works very

effectively. Leaders are able to spot quickly whether any pupils are falling behind. A range of support is available for pupils. This includes academic as well as personal support to help them to catch up with their learning. Consequently, pupils overcome barriers to learning and achieve outcomes in line with their peers. The majority of pupils at the end of key stage 4 in the last academic year met or exceeded their target grade.

Teachers use assessment carefully to identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge. Teachers are then able to plan precisely so that work is well matched to each pupil's ability. Teachers plan challenging and creative learning opportunities. For example, a mock courtroom scene allowed pupils to take roles to argue for the defence or prosecution. As well as deepening their knowledge of persuasive language using facts and opinions, they were also improving their oracy and debating skills. Pupils' enthusiasm and engagement in the activity showed that they were enjoying themselves, as well as developing and strengthening their English skills.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to explore how pupils in the school could benefit from the same high-quality resources as their peers in mainstream schools. You have worked with a local mainstream school, so that pupils are able to use the science laboratories to do experiments. This has been successful. Pupils have achieved GCSEs in combined science, biology and physics. Pupils also access sport and outdoor education in the local community. For example, pupils had planned a camping trip that they were all going on in the week of the inspection. For some pupils, this is the first time that they will have been camping with school and participating in outdoor adventure activities. You and your governors have also worked with the local authority to secure purpose-built accommodation. The school will shortly be moving into the new premises, where pupils will have access to quality resources and provision, such as larger classrooms and sports facilities.

Leaders have been very busy in continuing to improve the quality of education at the medical service. However, some necessary improvements, such as the school's website, have not been a priority. As a result, leaders and governors have not routinely checked that policies and information on the website reflect the updated and current information held in school. Therefore, parents do not have an up-to-date picture of the school's policies, procedures and information.

Leadership of home tutoring has also been strengthened this year. Parents appreciate the home tuition service. They are also grateful for the skills of the staff in recognising and supporting the medical, emotional and academic needs of their children. As a result of the effective provision, the vast majority of pupils who received home tuition this academic year returned successfully to their mainstream school. Leaders have identified actions that will further improve the home tuition service, for example by providing more opportunities to improve the quality of education for some pupils with life-limiting conditions, who are unlikely to return to their mainstream school.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. This is a small school where all staff know pupils extremely well. Daily staff briefings at the start and end of the school day keep all staff fully informed of any concerns around pupils' welfare, behaviour, safety and mental health. The high staff-to-pupil ratio also works to keep pupils safe. Staff keep a watchful and close eye on pupils at all times. Pupils said that the school keeps them safe and also teaches them how to be safe in the community. Pupils talked about staying safe online and how to guard their privacy online. Pupils have a clear understanding of how the staff support them with their emotional health and well-being.

Staff all understand their roles and responsibilities around safeguarding, and follow national guidelines. They understand the school's recording and reporting procedures. Referrals to the designated safeguarding lead are actioned quickly. The school works with external agencies, including the local authority, child and adolescent mental health service, medical professionals and mainstream schools. This partnership working supports pupils' safety, welfare and health needs effectively.

Although there is a strong culture of safeguarding in school and pupils are safe, leaders have not always ensured that recording systems are sufficiently clear and detailed.

Inspection findings

- A line of enquiry I explored with you was around pupils' attendance. The vast majority of pupils referred for a place in the medical service have poor attendance. Their medical or mental health needs have affected their ability to attend school regularly. This does not deter staff from finding the 'hook' that will engage pupils back into education. Staff establish strong relationships with pupils and families. This develops a trusting foundation, so that pupils can take the steps back into school and education.
- Leaders monitor attendance closely. They analyse individuals as well as groups. Leaders are quick to intervene should attendance be a cause for concern. Although whole-school attendance is slightly lower than similar schools nationally, the school's own information shows that most pupils' attendance improves significantly when compared to their previous attendance in their mainstream school.
- My final line of enquiry looked at how the school supports pupils' behavioural, social, emotional, physical and mental health needs. This is a real strength of the school. Because staff know the individual needs of each pupil, they know intuitively when each pupil may need additional support. The strong pastoral support ensures that any anxieties and worries are reduced. Pupils are able to settle well, engage and enjoy their learning. Staff encourage pupils to spend time together and enjoy fun activities. Bikes and scooters are used at breaktimes to have fun in the playground. Other pupils enjoy board games or just like to sit and chat over a drink and some snacks. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about

the work of the school and the progress that their children are making, emotionally, socially and academically. The only concern that parents voiced was around communication. They felt that the systems of communication between home and school could be improved, especially around key transition times, such as moving into the next academic year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the website is regularly checked so that all information and statutory policies are current and up to date
- recording systems for safeguarding in the school are sufficiently clear and detailed
- they keep parents regularly informed, especially around key transition times
- they implement the actions from the review of home tuition to strengthen this area of the school further.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Bather
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, inspectors met with you and senior leaders. Inspectors held meetings with the chair of the governing body and had a separate meeting with three members of the governing body. One telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority. A telephone conversation was held with a staff representative from a mainstream school. Inspectors met with the safeguarding lead and scrutinised paperwork and safeguarding records, including the single central record. Learning walks were undertaken and pupils' books were looked at. There were 10 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents (Parent View). Inspectors also met with three parents and talked to two parents on the telephone. Inspectors took account of the 10 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff, spoke to staff during the day and also met formally with a small group of staff. Inspectors spoke with pupils throughout the day and also met formally with a small group of pupils. Inspectors also took account of the nine responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils. Inspectors observed behaviour in lessons and around the school. Documents were scrutinised, including information about pupils'

achievement; the school's self-evaluation; the school improvement plan; records of pupils' attendance and information relating to the work of the governing body.