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Mr A Baird
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Baird

Short inspection of Foxfield School

Following my visit to the school on 17 October 2017 with Ann Gill, Her Majesty's 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have created an ethos in the school that promotes pupils' welfare above all else. All staff responding to Ofsted's survey say that they are proud to be part of the school. They are passionate about improving outcomes for the pupils and students. Staff are enthusiastic, compassionate and kind. The students in the sixth form and the pupils in the main school clearly appreciate the work that staff do to understand the complexity of their needs. Pupils are welcomed into the spacious new building by adults each morning. Staff skilfully tailor resources to enable pupils to access their learning. Consequently, pupils across the school make good progress. Pupils are enthusiastic, lively and inquisitive. Their positive attitudes make them a delight to talk to. They enjoy their learning because of the engaging lessons that they participate in.

In response to the areas for improvement at the last inspection, leaders support teachers to refine their planning so that pupils' next steps are identified well. There is a heavy emphasis on developing pupils' independent living skills. This supports pupils to make good progress. In the sixth form, students make excellent progress due to a greater focus on developing skills in mathematics and English. However, we agreed that targets for pupils in key stages 3 and 4 do not focus enough on promoting academic skills in English and mathematics. We also agreed that the opportunities to apply these skills are not as well developed as they are for pupils' personal and communication skills.

Another recommendation from the previous inspection was to improve the clarity of the plans for improving the school. Senior leaders' plans have developed since the last

inspection. However, we agreed that leaders' analysis of pupils' outcomes does not provide governors with the relevant information that they need to critically analyse the school's performance. This strategic overview is particularly important as the needs of pupils in the school are becoming increasingly diverse.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Leaders and governors place a strong emphasis on the importance of safeguarding. All staff know that pupils and students are vulnerable. You have set a clear culture of vigilance that runs throughout the school by identifying significant risk factors. Staff work well with other agencies to meet the needs of those in your care. This ensures that pupils feel safe and have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Your staff provide the highest levels of care guidance and support. There is a clear system of recording that focuses on small details to recognise changes in pupils' behaviour and all staff act swiftly to take appropriate action if they have any concerns.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Staff are trained and updated on safeguarding matters regularly. The staff ensure that they realise the leaders' tenacity in keeping pupils safe from harm.

Inspection findings

- As part of this inspection we agreed on a number of key lines of enquiry. The first of these was to look at how pupils are challenged to achieve the next steps in their learning. Staff skilfully question pupils and students. Adults employ a range of different strategies to match the learning of pupils to their specific needs. Pupils engage in their education because it is relevant and enjoyable. Their work records show a strong emphasis on developing pupils' independent living skills. Staff support pupils' behaviour to create positive learning environments. Pupils and students are now beginning to manage their own behaviour because of the excellent support that they receive.
- In the sixth form, students make even better progress because of the opportunities they have to apply their skills in subjects other than English and mathematics. For those students who have profound and multiple learning difficulties, highly effective support is provided for them to make sense of the world around them. For example, in physical education students have individualised support to develop their spatial awareness, coordination and core strength.
- Teaching and learning in key stages 3 and 4 is reflected well in pupils' records of learning. As a result, the progress pupils make is good. However, we agreed that there is a lack of emphasis on developing pupils' skills in mathematics and English in key stages 3 and 4. Your highly capable middle leaders have identified the need to provide these pupils with more opportunities to apply their English and mathematics skills across the curriculum. Although you prioritise pupils' personal and social development targets, the next steps in pupils' academic learning are sometimes not clearly defined in pupils' individual plans.

- We also agreed to look at how effectively careers guidance and work experience is preparing pupils for independent living. This is a strength of the school. You have appointed a knowledgeable and committed leader to focus on pupils' outcomes. Governors see the transition mentor role as one that champions the interests of pupils so that they can achieve realistic and ambitious outcomes by the time they leave the school. Pupils are encouraged to express preferences in their learning so that staff can engage in guiding their career aspirations effectively. One aspirational career pathway included a student mapping out how they could become part of the fashion industry. The transition manager focuses on ensuring that students' outcomes and destinations at the end of the sixth form are appropriate. Leaders continue to monitor students' progress and to support families way beyond the students' time at the school. The school's focus on developing life skills comes to fruition when students in the sixth form experience their work placements. Work experience provides students with rich opportunities to practise their skills in a real working environment.
- The final line of enquiry that we agreed upon for this inspection was to look at how effectively leaders improve pupils' attendance. This was due to the high levels of persistent absence in 2016. You have clear systems in place to record pupils' attendance and all absences are accounted for. Pupils and students regularly attend medical appointments and this affects their rates of attendance. Other medical issues, some of which are life-limiting conditions, have a significant impact on pupils' attendance due to prolonged stays in hospital. Due to the extensive medical needs of pupils, there is a range of healthcare professionals that support the school. Your staff engage well with other agencies to ensure that attendance is as high as it could be.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- plans to improve the school are refined to include clear outcomes that focus on meeting the diverse and growing range of needs for the pupils and students at the school
- there is a greater focus on setting targets for pupils in key stages 3 and 4 so that they can apply their English and mathematics skills across the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Bentham
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you and governors to discuss safeguarding and aspects of school leadership and management. Inspectors visited classes to observe teaching and learning and analysed pupils' learning records. Inspectors spoke to pupils

and students in the sixth form informally during lessons about their work and with the recently elected school council to talk about their experiences at the school. Inspectors heard pupils read as part of their classroom activities. Inspectors reviewed safeguarding documentation, including the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff and reviewed safeguarding arrangements. Inspectors also reviewed documentation which included the monitoring of teaching and learning, the school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses and the school development plan. The lead inspector took into account eight responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, 13 responses to the pupil survey and 23 responses to the staff survey.