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31 October 2018

Mrs Denise Clayton  
Head of Service  
PACE  
Derbyshire Hill Road  
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Merseyside  
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Dear Mrs Clayton

### **Short inspection of PACE**

Following my visit to the school on 18 October 2018, 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 2014.

### **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 successfully enabled your teacher-in-charge to lead PACE. He has high expectations and leads by example. You are ably assisted by the assured, enthusiastic staff team. Together you make a positive difference to pupils' attitudes to learning and renew their belief in themselves and their future.

There is a shared sense of passion for ensuring that pupils receive another chance at educational success. You have created an environment of care and nurture that radiates through the whole school community. Together with staff, parents and pupils, you are rightly proud of being part of PACE. You break down barriers to learning and create an environment where pupils feel secure and are keen to re-engage in their learning.

Parents and carers who spoke with me were very positive about the school. They offered sentiments such as: 'This school has turned things around for my child.' They also said their children have made 'amazing' progress. Parents were unanimous in saying that they feel their children are happy and settled.

The overwhelming majority of staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire enjoy being part of the team at PACE. They feel that it is well led and managed. Staff share your aspirations for pupils and endorse the calm, orderly and loving culture that has been created. There is a strong sense of the staff team working to do its very best for pupils.

At the previous inspection, the inspectors asked you to increase the opportunities that pupils are given to write at length. This has been fully addressed. Writing has a high profile in your school and is regularly celebrated. Pupils are thrilled to receive the weekly 'wonderful writer' award. They are given opportunities to write in all areas of the curriculum as well as within their English lessons. There is a consistently high expectation that writing is well presented, with appropriate grammar, spelling and punctuation. When they start school, many pupils are negative about and struggle with their writing, but by the time they leave they are enthusiastic, confident writers. They are particularly proud of the many stories and poems that are published as part of the 'Young Writers' competition.

Inspectors also asked you to ensure that you had effective ways of monitoring the progress of pupils. You have set up a comprehensive system to regularly monitor the progress of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. You have set high expectations of what pupils will achieve while they are in your care. Teachers use assessment information effectively to plan for pupils' individual needs and their next steps in learning, including their behavioural and emotional development. Leaders and the management committee have a clear picture of the progress of pupils over time in English and mathematics. However, they do not use information as effectively to gain an overview of the behavioural and emotional development of pupils.

Pupils often start school with gaps in their mathematical understanding. Basic number and calculation tend to be the weakest areas. Teachers are quick to identify these weaknesses and they then work systematically to build pupils' skills, knowledge and confidence. Pupils' books confirm that this has been effective. However, books also reveal that pupils have limited opportunities to apply their new mathematical knowledge and understanding and to think more deeply about their learning.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The safeguarding and welfare of pupils are given a high priority. You and the staff team have ensured that pupils are in a safe and secure environment by promoting the clear message that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Safeguarding arrangements are detailed and thorough and are reviewed regularly to ensure that they meet statutory requirements and are fit for purpose. Staff and members of the management committee undertake appropriate up-to-date training. This includes training about keeping pupils safe from radicalisation and extremism, child sexual exploitation and neglect.

You and the school team offer a high standard of vigilance and support for vulnerable pupils. Leaders have extremely effective relationships with external agencies, including other local schools. You make an important contribution to the safeguarding of the vulnerable pupils in your care.

Pupils said that they feel very safe and well cared for. They feel confident that adults will help them if needed. They were able to talk about the ways they can stay

safe and healthy in a range of situations but were more hesitant about the best ways to keep themselves safe online. However, parents feel that you and the staff keep children very safe.

## **Inspection findings**

- Pupils often start the school with knowledge and skills below that typically expected for their age. Assessment information is promptly collected by leaders to track the progress of pupils and ensure that they are making as much progress as possible before they return to a mainstream school. This information and evidence from looking at work books clearly indicate that pupils throughout the school are making at least good progress against their individual targets in English, mathematics and behavioural and emotional development. Those who can are catching up with their national peers, particularly in reading and writing. Where pupils continue to struggle with their learning, they make good progress from their starting points because they are well supported. Teachers make a valuable contribution to collecting information for any pupils that require an education, health and care plan.
- Pupils typically attend PACE for two terms. The expectation that a pupil will be reintegrated into a mainstream school is agreed from the outset. Transition arrangements are thorough and thoughtfully carried out. Leaders are extremely mindful of the needs of individual pupils and their families. To this end, they are flexible and adapt reintegration arrangements as needed to make sure that returns to mainstream school are enduring and successful. Where a pupil is better suited to a special school, leaders work well with the local authority and sensitively with parents to ensure that the pupil is placed in the most appropriate provision.
- Leaders' relationships with St Helens primary schools are extremely positive. The high-quality support, advice and guidance offered to receiving schools make an invaluable contribution to the success of pupils' reintegration into school. Referrals for a pupil placement to PACE are transparent, giving headteachers confidence that access to the school is fair and equitable. St Helens headteachers spoken to at the time of the inspection had nothing but praise for the work of the school. They felt that pupils were extremely well prepared for their return to their schools and that communication and liaison between PACE and mainstream schools was superb.
- There are effective systems for monitoring absence. Good attendance is rewarded and has a high profile in the school. Improving an individual pupil's attendance is a priority for the school in preparation for that pupil being reintegrated into mainstream education. Compared to their attendance in their previous school, most pupils' attendance has rapidly improved. The few pupils who have been persistently absent are given appropriate support to ensure that they now attend much more regularly.
- There are a number of strengths evident at PACE. The school's relationship with parents is extremely strong. Leaders and staff work hard and with great success to build trust and confidence with parents who are often disillusioned about education and disheartened that there is no one who can help their child. 'They

are great listeners,' and 'I know they will help me, if I need it,' are typical comments from parents about staff.

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal and emotional skills is a strength. It is considered the key to unlocking pupils' potential to be successful back at mainstream school. All pupils benefit from regular sessions to help them develop personally, emotionally and socially. There is an emphasis on developing pupils' self-belief, resilience and mental health. Teachers' and other adults' deep knowledge of pupils and the strong relationships they build ensure that the school provides a safe, nurturing environment in which pupils thrive and succeed.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they have an overview of the behavioural and emotional development of pupils
- teachers offer opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge and understanding to think more deeply about their learning
- pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe online.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Eastwood  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you, the assistant head of service, the teacher-in-charge and deputy teacher-in-charge. I also met with the person responsible for maintaining safeguarding records on the day of my visit. I met with four members of the management committee, including the chair, and also met with three local headteachers. I spoke on the telephone with your school improvement partner. I visited lessons and scrutinised pupils' work. I took account of the views of parents who talked with me before the school day. I also took account of the 10 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and spoke with staff during the day. I met individual pupils to talk about school life. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. I looked at school documents including: information about pupils' achievement; the school's self-evaluation; the school improvement plan; information related to the work of the management committee and records relating to safeguarding.