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Mr B Kerwin
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Dear Mr Kerwin

Short inspection of Alt Bridge School

Following my visit to the school on 12 March 2019 with Kathleen McArthur, 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 outstanding in September 2013.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The broad and balanced curriculum inspires and engages pupils and students. The pastoral support provided throughout all key stages promotes independence, confidence, life skills and resilience. Preparation for the next steps in education or life is at the core of everything this school does extremely well. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school and one comment typified many: 'Our son is in his transition year and the support we have had in relation to his next steps has been invaluable. We believe that Alt Bridge School have worked hard alongside us as parents to prepare our son for adult life.'

At the previous inspection, inspectors asked you to pursue your vision for the development of post-16 provision. This provision is now well established and students are making exceptional progress. The college ethos, atmosphere and curriculum are supporting students very effectively to develop into confident, self-assured adults. Students undertake functional-skills qualifications in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), alongside other vocational qualifications and the Duke of Edinburgh's (DofE) Award. In food preparation, pupils develop the skills to work within a busy kitchen, preparing lunch for the school's Hot Box Café. A group of students were observed chopping vegetables, preparing a curry and baking muffins. Students also benefit from outdoor experiences, including canoeing, climbing and camping. As part of the DofE

Award, students have undertaken voluntary work, including painting and decorating at a local rugby club. Students also worked with local primary school children to create a vegetable, flower and insect garden in their school grounds.

Post-16 leaders have also expanded the links to further education, training and workplace providers in the community. The independent careers information, education, advice and guidance provided supports students to make informed choices about their next steps. Students move on from Alt Bridge to continue their education, gain employment or undertake internships. The vast majority of students are successful in their move and remain in employment, education or training.

Your growing reputation has meant that you and the governors have recently agreed with the local authority to expand the school even further to accommodate an additional number of pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The designated lead for safeguarding and the pupils' welfare coordinator work seamlessly to ensure that pupils' and students' safety and well-being are of paramount importance. They are quick to respond to any concerns and are tenacious in following up referrals to the local authority or other agencies. Records are meticulous and detailed, including the school's record of the required checks on members of staff. Staff training is up to date and meets statutory requirements. The high staff-to-pupil ratio works to keep pupils safe. Staff are highly vigilant and are quick to notice any changes in a pupil's behaviour or appearance and take appropriate action.

Through the personal, social, health and citizenship education programme, leaders have embedded a culture of safety across the school. Workshops, theatre performances, lessons, assemblies and visiting professionals help pupils learn how to stay safe in school, online and in the community.

Inspection findings

- One of the lines of enquiry I explored with you was the school curriculum and how it supports the academic and personal progress of pupils. The full range of national curriculum subjects on offer enables pupils to widen their subject knowledge as well as developing creative, practical and physical skills. In key stage 4, pupils can choose from a wide range of options to study, including environmental science, horticulture and drama. They also continue to study the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and ICT. The school's enrichment programme is a real strength and broadens pupils' learning beyond the classroom. Staff go the extra mile to plan activities that will open pupils' eyes and minds to new experiences. For example, pupils in Year 8 attended an orchestral live performance, and pupils in key stage 3 developed their confidence and teamwork skills during an outdoor-education residential experience. Lunchtime clubs, including chess, yoga, guitar and sport, allow pupils to learn and develop

new skills. The school's formal and informal curriculums work exceptionally well together to support pupils' academic, social and personal development.

Consequently, pupils continue to make outstanding progress, as well as gaining nationally recognised qualifications.

- I also looked at the progress that disadvantaged pupils make when compared to other pupils. Leaders use additional funding very effectively across the school. Pupils have benefited from additional one-to-one lessons, as well as enrichment and personalised support. Leaders monitor the progress of all pupils rigorously and are quick to intervene if a pupil's progress begins to dip. The school's own assessment system and data about outcomes show that gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others have almost closed across most subjects. In some subjects, disadvantaged pupils are outperforming other pupils.
- My final line of enquiry considered pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare and whether they continued to be strengths of the school. Parents were in agreement that the transition from primary school into Year 7 was very supportive and helped their children to settle quickly into their new school. A typical parental view was, 'We were so worried when our child was moving school but we didn't need to be. He settled so quickly and has grown and matured so much since going to high school. We are very proud of him and so happy with the school; it's been fantastic for us all.'
- Leaders have a clear rationale which supports very well pupils' personal development across all key stages. Through a personalised approach, staff support each pupil to make the small steps of progress required to become confident, self-assured young people. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about their progress. Students in the post-16 provision spoke with passion about their love of reading; others spoke about the marketable ICT skills they had gained to help to secure a job in this field. Treating pupils as individuals is a key strength of the school. Staff members described the school as having 'happy staff; happy pupils'.
- The teachers' detailed planning engages and motivates every learner. During the inspection, pupils listened well and persevered with their tasks because lessons were well matched to their abilities and interests. Enrichment activities, merit awards and celebration assemblies all work to motivate pupils and students to attend well and enjoy school. There is very little bullying and pupils and parents agreed that staff are quick to listen and intervene to stop any bullying when it occurs. The skilled teaching and excellent pastoral care are working very effectively to ensure that behaviour continues to be outstanding.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to work with the local authority and other stakeholders to expand the school's provision to accommodate an additional number of pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, 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

Julie Bather
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, inspectors met with you and senior leaders. They held a meeting with the vice-chair of the governing body. They met with the safeguarding leads and scrutinised paperwork and safeguarding records, including the record of checks completed on staff. Joint learning walks with leaders were completed and pupils' and students' books and learning records were scrutinised. There were 16 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's parent questionnaire, and inspectors met with 13 parents. There were no responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff; however, inspectors spoke with staff during the day and also met formally with 14 staff. Inspectors spoke with pupils informally during the day and met formally with 15 pupils. They observed behaviour in lessons and around the school. Documents were scrutinised, including information about pupils' progress, the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, records of pupils' attendance and information relating to the work of the governing body.