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Ms L Warmer
Headteacher
Park Lane School
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Dear Ms Warmer

Short inspection of Park Lane School

Following my visit to the school on 27 September 2018 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 October 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of outstanding as a result of this inspection.**

Leaders and governors have maintained the nurturing, supportive, friendly and respectful ethos of the school. Parents feel listened to and appreciate the open communication between home and school. Daily diaries are used effectively to communicate with parents. These diaries include all aspects of their children's day relating to their physical, emotional, personal, health, behaviour and learning needs.

Pupils in key stage 4 and students in the sixth form continue to benefit from the high school and college being on the same site. This not only enables them to enjoy wider facilities but also supports their learning of life skills, communication and independence. This in turn helps to prepare them for the next steps in their life. With full staff supervision, Park Lane pupils and students integrate with mainstream pupils and students. They are comfortable within these surroundings and are consequently a meaningful part of the local community.

Staff know pupils well and activities in lessons are personalised to support the specific needs of each pupil. Relationships between staff and pupils are a real strength of the school and this is appreciated by parents. Well-established routines and firm but gentle expectations ensure that pupils behave well and feel safe and secure. Governors and leaders have also introduced an enhanced curriculum which

caters well for pupils with sensory needs. This has a positive impact in developing their communication, speech and language skills.

Since the last inspection you have acted to improve the outdoor area in the early years. There are now plenty of activities for children to choose from which help to support their physical and independence skills. The provision of large and small apparatus enables them to develop their gross and fine motor skills. Staff guide and help children to use the equipment. Children enjoy using the hammock while listening to a calm and soothing story. For children who are more active, there is plenty of space to run around and move freely. This supports their physical development well.

Governors have strengthened their roles since the last inspection, including by completing relevant training, for example, about analysing assessment information. They know the school well and ensure that teachers take effective action so that the vast majority of pupils make progress towards their personal and educational targets. The governing body has been reorganised, which has enhanced the effectiveness of the different committees. Governors are passionate about the school and ensure that parents are well supported. For example, the introduction of coffee mornings has helped to include parents in the life of the school and provides opportunities for conversation and informal support.

Across the school, in some lessons, time is not always used effectively and activities do not always challenge pupils to achieve as well as they might. Activities do not fully involve some pupils who are disengaged and staff do not always act quickly enough to keep pupils motivated.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. This is recognised by leaders, staff, parents, pupils and governors. Staff understand policies and procedures well and all staff training is up to date. Governors meet regularly with leaders and staff to ensure that policies and procedures are consistently applied.

The high staff-to-pupil ratio is consistent across all areas of the school. Staff are highly vigilant, and pupils are safe in lessons, at playtimes and while doing activities such as swimming. Risk assessments are completed in consultation with parents when pupils are ready to move into key stages 4 and 5.

Although the culture of safeguarding is strong, record-keeping needs to be more detailed and clearer.

Inspection findings

- One of the areas I explored with you was whether pupils make good or better progress from their starting points. Students in the sixth form gain Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network awards in personal and social development. Inspectors observed the development of such skills across all key

stages. The vast majority of sixth-form students move on to positive destinations, including mainstream colleges. The school's own assessment information shows that pupils across the school make at least good progress. However, inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' books showed that they make good, but not outstanding, progress.

- Another line of enquiry was whether leaders continue to provide an outstanding quality of education. Teachers pay careful attention to the needs of learners in their care. For example, in one lesson the creative use of resources supported learning well, helping pupils to add numbers and understand key words such as 'stop' and 'go'. Pupils in the sixth form demonstrate the skills to work effectively together through shopping, choosing and then cooking their own lunch. Parents report that their children make particular progress in the areas of communication, speech and language and in regulating their own behaviour. However, at times resources and time are used less effectively, resulting in teachers not challenging pupils enough.
- I also explored pupils' attendance with you. There has been an increase in the number who are persistently absent. You and your governors are fully aware of this issue. There has been a recent increase in the number of pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties and pupils with particular medical conditions. Some miss extended periods of time in school due to their health needs or attendance at medical appointments which are out of leaders' control. Leaders and governors understand the importance of regular attendance and work with parents to ensure that pupils attend regularly.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recording systems for safeguarding in the school are sufficiently clear and detailed
- lessons are purposeful and challenging and allow pupils across the school to make consistently strong progress.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cheshire East. 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 a meeting with two members of the governing body, including the chair. Two telephone conversations were held with representatives of Cheshire East local authority. 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 scrutinised. There were eight responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents (Parent View) and inspectors met with six parents. They took account of the two responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff, spoke to staff during the day and also met with a small group of staff. Inspectors spoke with pupils and met with the student council. They observed behaviour in lessons and around the school. Documents were scrutinised, including information about pupils' achievement; the schools self-evaluation; the school improvement plan; records of pupils' attendance and information relating to the work of your governing body.