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Ms Carey Fish  
Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Carey Fish

### **Short inspection of Westbridge Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 12 March 2019 with Declan McCarthy, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in 2013.

### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection, and the school became an academy within the Raedwald Trust group of alternative provision schools in 2016.

You and the chief executive officer of the trust have worked closely in partnership to ensure an effective education for the vulnerable group of students who attend the school. The great majority of the pupils have been excluded from previous schools or are unable to access mainstream education, often due to high levels of social, emotional, behavioural and or mental health needs. At Westbridge Academy all your staff are working together to enable pupils to succeed academically and socially and move on to their next stage of education/ training or employment successfully and safely.

The short time pupils attend the school (up to two years) provides a chance to gain academic success and accreditation in a range of core subjects, and gives the pupils a foundation for entering college, the workplace, or further training such as apprenticeships. It is a supportive environment which enables the raising of self-confidence and self-esteem of the pupils through success, improving attendance and leaving behind previous negative school experiences.

You provide a personalised timetable and curriculum offer for each pupil. The tailoring of this package enables most pupils to increase their access to formal education in a supportive, nurturing way. The provision of varied activities helps to

progress pupils towards meeting their goals. Staff feel strongly about improving the life chances of the pupils. They find interesting ways to help them access the best opportunities to fulfil their potential and move them on with a range of skills which will be of use for later years.

You help pupils to improve their overall attendance over time. However, many pupils continue to be on reduced timetables to enable them to access the school environment. This attendance level still falls well below expectations of full-time education.

Parents are very positive about the school and the changes it helps make for their children. Parents who used the free-text section of the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, were all very complimentary. In the words of one parent: 'My child has never thrived so well before attending Westbridge. He struggles so much with his mental health and this school does all it can to accommodate his needs.'

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your senior leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The single central record of staff recruitment checks meets all requirements. All your staff are fully engaged in actively promoting the safeguarding of pupils. The level of training for staff is good and up to date in all areas, including the issues of county lines, female genital mutilation, preventing radicalisation and child sexual exploitation.

Those with responsibility for safeguarding ensure that this is taken seriously. There is considerable multi-agency working to ensure that those with additional needs are carefully monitored and supported. The use of other specialist off-site facilities is checked thoroughly to enable pupils to feel and be safe while at these activities.

Procedures are robust and aimed at keeping children safe and teaching them to keep themselves safe in the community. Discussion with pupils brought out the work on an 'internet safety day' which led to a number of pupils changing their home internet settings to a safer level.

### **Inspection findings**

- You and your leadership team continue to develop and improve the provision. The formation and development of the specialist multi-academy trust has had a positive impact on the work of this school and enabled a sharing of your good practices. Policies and procedures have developed to enable a wider range of opportunities and resources to meet the needs of the pupils. Access to research project funds has begun to improve the ability to aid the transition for pupils from the school to appropriate placements after school.
- Trustees, including the chief executive officer and local governors, monitor the work of the school and are pro-active in challenging, yet supporting, your work. They are fully aware of the challenges facing the school, and its pupils, but also helpful in finding solutions and working with you to improve the school further.

- With the support of the trust and the use of external reviews, you monitor the quality of teaching carefully, which links to your staff being involved in continuous professional development at many levels. You are fully aware of the strengths of the school and the areas for improvement. The current staff recognise the support and recognise how much the school has improved since the last inspection. One hundred per cent of staff who completed the Ofsted online survey are proud to be a member of staff at this school. They fully understand the values and purpose of the provision and are able to articulate this.
- Pupils arrive at the school for a short period of time, spending up to two years and then moving on to either local colleges, training or jobs. Time to enable changes in attitude to learning and work, from disaffection to engagement and self-worth, is thus short. Pupils appreciate the nature of the alternative pathway you provide. They recognise the help they receive to become more self-confident and they begin to make steps to gain accredited qualifications in a range of core subjects. Pupils face many challenges in their environment and want to improve. The behaviour of the pupils present at the time of the inspection was polite, relaxed, friendly and welcoming. They were able to discuss their targets and next steps and show awareness of what they needed to improve their life chances. They were proud to show their work, including demonstrating an innovatively created rap song which focused on 'making the right choices and changing my life around'.
- The personalisation of the offer to pupils is an important part of the school's ethos and allows a different package of academic and social support to be given to meet individual needs. This does include the amount of on-site attendance for learning, which you are aware could be increased and improved to gain even greater progress for the pupils. It does allow pupils who have not attended previous provision a chance to build attendance gradually and improve over the two years but limits the amount of academic qualifications pupils can achieve.
- You and your staff work hard to find placements for when pupils leave the school at local colleges and training providers. Some pupils are enabled to move into apprenticeships through the personalisation of their programme while still at school. Programmes are well supported by your staff for the first few weeks while pupils move into the post-16 provision to enable a successful transition. Links with local colleges are strong and supportive, and are also supported by positive links with trustees and the overall work of the trust.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- attendance, is improved and increases, especially for those pupils who are persistent absentees. Attendance levels should more closely mirror expectations of all schools, enabling a greater impact on pupil's inclusion into positive society.
- the curriculum offer is further enhanced by increasing opportunities for developing healthy living skills and habits around non-smoking on school

grounds, and in areas such as the preparation of food, so that pupils learn to work cooperatively in groups as well as individually.

- they develop a culture of sharing and learning good and better practice from other alternative provisions outside the Raedwald Trust and local area to further enhance your capacity to improve.

I am copying this letter to the chief executive officer and chair of trustees, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jackie Mullan  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors reviewed a range of published information, the school and trust website, the self-evaluation document and school development plan. We examined a range of safeguarding documents, case studies and records of attendance and exclusions.

We visited the majority of teaching sessions on-site during the inspection, in a number of subjects, accompanied by senior leaders, and observed pupil behaviour at unstructured times such as breaktimes and lunchtimes.

We held meetings with a number of senior staff, teachers and trust representatives and the chief executive officer of the trust. We spoke to a small group of pupils and considered 11 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire free-text comments from parents, and 19 responses to the staff survey.