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Mr Richard Gargon  
Principal  
St Piers School  
Young Epilepsy  
St Pier's Lane  
Lingfield  
Surrey  
RH7 6PW

Dear Mr Gargon

### **Short inspection of St Piers School**

Following my visit to the school on 29 November 2017 with Maxine McDonald-Taylor, 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 good in April 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You joined the school at an exciting time in January 2017, soon after pupils and staff had moved in to an impressive new building. Pupils now enjoy excellent facilities such as a swimming pool, sensory rooms and go-kart track that help provide exciting and memorable learning experiences. Leaders and teachers could not ask for any more in terms of having the facilities and resources available to motivate and inspire pupils to make progress in their learning and development.

Your staff demonstrate extremely high levels of dedication, care and resilience when working with pupils. They know each pupil as an individual and take care of their every need. These needs include significant medical needs that impact on pupils' well-being and progress. The multidisciplinary support provided to pupils through the wider Young Epilepsy organisation has a positive impact on the outcomes for pupils in the school.

Nothing is too much trouble for the vast majority of your staff. They have helped the school to get through a period where recruitment has been challenging, without any adverse effect on the outcomes for pupils. As one parent explained: 'The teaching staff are caring and considerate of my son and his needs. They focus on the positive and what my son can do rather than what they can't do.' Another parent told inspectors that they are 'amazed that their child is achieving things they never thought they would be able to do'.

You have led the restructuring of the leadership team to make stronger links between the school and its partner, St Piers College (also part of Young Epilepsy, but which is inspected separately). The new structure ensures that there is a strategic overview of all aspects of education in the Young Epilepsy organisation. You have already strengthened the strategic planning and reviewed processes of self-evaluation so that they are incisive and insightful. You, and your leadership team, know exactly what still needs to improve and how to do it.

Other leaders have seen their roles change, spreading beyond the school and into the partner college. This has allowed them to have a greater impact across the wider organisation, without losing the joy they gain, from seeing both pupils and staff from both establishments develop and flourish when they work with them. The education governing body has refocused its work so that it looks closely at the educational aspects of the organisation. Its members ask leaders challenging questions and seek to ensure that pupils receive the best education possible.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance is high unless it is thwarted by an individual's complex medical needs. The curriculum is well suited to the needs of pupils and includes many exciting activities that allow pupils to develop their skills at just the right level. There are clear strengths in the curriculum, for example in physical education, where pupils are able to take risks and try new things, such as sailing and trampolining, safely. Pupils' medical requirements or special educational needs and/or disabilities are no barrier to adventure. The power of what can be achieved at St Piers should not be underestimated. As one parent stated about their son's placement: 'This place has frankly changed the course of his life.'

You recognise that there is more work to do to further improve the curriculum. The plans for a twin-track approach, depending on the level of pupils' needs, are developing well. However, you and your team recognise that it will take time to embed this new approach and that assessment systems will need to be refined so they match the new curriculum. You clearly understand that the more effective use of assessment will help leaders, teachers and other staff to work together well to improve teaching and accelerate progress still further.

At the time of the previous inspection leaders were asked to improve the achievement of the most able pupils and place a greater emphasis on the development of skills in reading and writing. These areas both formed key lines of enquiry for this inspection. Improvements have clearly been made in these areas, although there is still more to do to make sure that assessment is used well to accelerate progress and to ensure that sixth-form students achieve the most suitable accreditation possible.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements in the school are fit for purpose and meet the specific needs of your pupils. Records are detailed and of high quality. They can be accessed securely by all appropriate staff.

The fact that every pupil is truly known and understood as an individual ensures that any medical or intimate care that is required can be administered sensitively and in line with school guidelines. Other practitioners within the Young Epilepsy organisation contribute well to a holistic approach to pupil's well-being in school and this helps to keep them safe.

Staff appreciate that there is always a member of the safeguarding team on call. Incidents and concerns are recorded and followed up rigorously. Information is shared appropriately and confidentially, including with parents and social workers.

The regular training that takes place has been effective at making staff reflect on different possibilities and risks to pupils' safety. This has strengthened the safeguarding culture and improved practice. Staff know about their duty to 'whistleblow' if they have any concerns.

Although safeguarding in the school is effective, the overall procedures for safeguarding pupils throughout the Young Epilepsy organisation are sometimes overcomplicated. School leaders are well placed to provide expert guidance and support to help pupils to stay safe out of school as well.

## **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection we worked with your leadership team to explore:
  - how well the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils, including students in the sixth form
  - the opportunities pupils have to develop their reading, writing and communication skills
  - how the most able pupils are identified and challenged.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. The new two-tier model gives pupils different pathways to follow depending on their level of need. There is, rightly, a greater emphasis on vocational learning and work-related skills for older pupils.
- The curriculum is flexible enough to adapt to individual pupil's strengths and weaknesses. However, it is too early to see the impact of the new curriculum model on pupils' progress. This is because systems of assessment are not yet refined or matched well enough to the new curriculum. As a result, teachers are not using assessment information as well as they could to help plan activities and choose resources that precisely match what pupils need to learn or do next.
- Since the previous inspection, more careful tracking of progress in reading and spelling, where appropriate, has been put in place. This shows that pupils are clearly making good progress from their very low starting points. For example, some pupils are recognising more common words. Samples of workbooks seen by inspectors show strong progress in writing for some pupils. Other pupils are using their own writing skills to evaluate their success in other subjects such as physical education. Pupils are encouraged to use spoken communication where they are able to, including at lunchtimes.

- Teachers carefully identify the most able pupils within their teaching groups. They provide work that is planned to challenge the most able pupils. This is the case across the curriculum, including in mathematics, literacy, vocational activities and physical education, where pupils have the opportunity to compete against their peers from other schools.
- A much wider range of subjects is available to sixth-form students, and they all receive some form of accreditation before leaving the school. However, more emphasis could be given to ensuring that the most able students complete the most appropriate and challenging qualifications possible.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- current plans to develop the curriculum are fully implemented and embedded
- assessment systems are streamlined to match the new curriculum, and assessment information is used carefully to help accelerate progress
- qualifications chosen for the oldest students in the sixth form are the most challenging they can be
- they use their influence and experience in the wider Young Epilepsy organisation to ensure that safeguarding policies and practices are less complicated.

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Selby  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

My colleague and I met with you and other leaders. We carried out learning walks with senior leaders of all key stages in a range of subjects. We spoke to pupils in class where appropriate, and heard a small number of pupils read. We held meetings with key staff about the curriculum, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. We also met with a group of teachers to discuss pupils' progress. I observed the lunchtime procedures, and met with members of the education governing body. I considered 11 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, three responses to the online pupil survey and 35 responses to the confidential staff questionnaire. We scrutinised a wide range of school documentation.