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Mr Richard Cronin
Principal
Everton Free School
42 Spellow Lane
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Dear Mr Cronin

Short inspection of Everton Free School

Following my visit to the school on 9 October 2018 with Dawn Farrent, 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 May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

There has been considerable change since the previous inspection. You are the second new principal to be appointed in that time. The chair of the governing body has been replaced from within the governing body. The school has moved into its purpose-built premises and has admitted more pupils. The school recently set up a new library in its main building. At the start of this school year, the school opened an additional site for sixth-form education at Vauxhall Motors Sports and Social Club in Ellesmere Port. Leaders have successfully used these changes to improve the school and kept a clear focus on meeting the academic and wider needs of pupils. One of the distinctive features of the school is its close links with Everton Football Club, including through Everton in the Community. One aspect of this is the school's sharing of the club's motto, 'nil satis nisi optimum' (nothing but the best is good enough). This principle is strongly evident in the commitment and approach of leaders and other members of staff. Leaders' expectations of themselves, other staff and pupils are very high. The school is calm and friendly.

The school offers different programmes for pupils up to the end of Year 11 and for sixth-form students. The younger pupils study a core of English, mathematics and

science, which is enhanced by options including a range of subjects such as art, childcare, music and sport. Leaders ensure that all these programmes lead to academic qualifications so that pupils can demonstrate that they are ready for employment or further study when they leave the school. In addition, pupils are expected to take part in programmes which build their wider confidence and skill. These include The Prince's Trust work and participation in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. The success of these programmes is widely shared and celebrated through the school's Twitter account and publicly recognised in other ways. For example, the school very recently received a national award for its work in making a local railway station more attractive while branding it in 'Everton blue'. The sixth-form programmes are centred around sport but also provide opportunities for pupils to gain a GCSE pass in English and mathematics when pupils have not achieved this before. Sixth-form students' experience is widened by other activities such as coaching children, including in regular visits to China and South Africa. However, there are no regular opportunities in class for students to discuss matters such as relationships and sexual health.

At the previous inspection, inspectors asked the school to improve teaching so that pupils make the best possible progress. Teaching in the school is effective and helps pupils to succeed. For pupils in key stages 3 and 4, this is often in stark contrast to their previous school experience. Teaching is carefully planned to stretch and support pupils, whatever their starting points. The small class sizes mean that teachers know pupils well and can target activities and questions to build on pupils' learning.

The school's impact on individuals is often very marked, with pupils' life chances being completely transformed. This demonstrates the very positive impact the school's practice has. However, leaders have had less focus on ensuring that published policies meet the requirements set out in guidance.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, staff and governors give the safeguarding of pupils very high priority. They ensure that safeguarding is effective. Leaders recognise that unless this is the case, pupils will not be able to thrive and learn. Staff are confident in identifying possible risks affecting pupils and act to follow these up. Leaders know who to refer to outside school to get advice or support for pupils. Staff work closely with professionals from outside school to protect pupils. Plans are in place to strengthen this work further, for example in the appointment of a school nurse employed directly by the school.

Staff training about safeguarding is thorough. Staff were updated about the changes to the government's guidance about safeguarding at the start of this school year. However, the versions of the school's policies about safeguarding and child protection published on the school's website do not fully reflect this guidance. Leaders have recently attended the local authority annual briefings about safeguarding and know what is expected of them.

The gains in attendance made by pupils when they join the school contribute to their safeguarding because they spend more time in a safe and well-controlled environment.

The school premises are safe, with suitable security arrangements in place.

Inspection findings

- Leadership in the school is highly effective. Senior leaders have created a culture where staff are determined to provide the best possible for pupils. Middle leaders are passionate and form a coherent team. Leaders know what the school does well and build on this. For example, they have made sure that the curriculum has evolved to provide even greater opportunities for pupils. Leaders' actions have ensured that, despite the recent period of significant change, improvement has happened. This has led to pupils making more progress year on year and similar increases in attendance. The sixth-form development has been well planned and enables more students to benefit from the specialist sports provision offered. However, this is not exclusive; leaders have introduced level 1 courses in the sixth-form, in part to provide an additional route for pupils in key stage 4 who wish to remain at the school.
- Governors know the school very well and use this knowledge to add to their challenge to leaders. They are proud of the success of the school. Governors' skills and experience closely match the needs of the school. However, some of the details which should be published to provide reassurance that governors work as transparently as possible do not appear on the school's website.
- Pupils' outcomes have increased. The GCSE and other results achieved by pupils over the last two years compare very favourably to those found in similar provision, locally and across the country. Staff assess pupils' starting points on entry to the school and use these to set targets for pupils' achievement. When necessary, because of previous disruption to pupils' education, staff link these targets to pupils' key stage 2 results to ensure that their expectations are high enough. Staff identify other outcomes, such as pupils' pride and self-confidence, as being of equal importance to their academic success. While these less-precise outcomes are harder to measure, the positive changes they lead to are seen in the day-by-day life of the school and in pupils' futures. Equally, the school's attention to pupils' wider welfare means that some experience improvement in their physical and mental health while at the school. Pupils' transition rates from key stage 4 into further education, employment and training are very high.
- Teaching is effective. Pupils and students engage well with their learning. The high standards set by teachers contribute to pupils' good behaviour. Similarly, the care taken by pupils in their written work indicates how they respond to teachers' high expectations. Teachers and teaching assistants work together to ensure that pupils' learning needs are met. Additional teaching provided in English and mathematics enables the most able to be stretched further. While teachers are confident in the subjects they teach, teaching is enhanced further by the school's employment of a professional artist and a musician to teach in those subjects. The art work produced by pupils is of a high quality and those in a music class

during the inspection were confident in demonstrating their skills and working together.

- Provision in the sixth-form has been developed to even better meet students' needs. Two aspects of this are the opening of the new sixth-form satellite centre and the addition of level 1 courses. Such changes have been managed effectively. Students in the new sixth-form centre are highly committed to their work, attend very well and make significant progress. The facilities in the sixth-form centre are of very high quality and provide a suitable location for the specialist programmes offered. Students on all sixth-form courses value the education provided. While many students are ambitious to play football at the highest level, they are realistic and recognise that the school provides them with the skills and qualifications they may need to follow other routes once they leave school. The sixth-form curriculum is effective in providing the specialist learning that students desire. However, it has insufficient emphasis on students' continuing personal and social development, including their health, relationships and sex education.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- policies and procedures are further strengthened through checks that these comply fully with government guidance on expected practice
- the sixth-form curriculum provides more opportunities for students' personal, social and health education.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the Everton in the Community Free School Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Liverpool. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Selby
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, we met with you, the deputy principal and other leaders to discuss the school's effectiveness. I had a discussion with the chair of the governing body. I also met with a representative of Liverpool City Council, which is one of the local authorities that commissions the school to take pupils, and with a senior leader from a school which commissions places directly. My colleague met with groups of pupils and we talked with others around the school, during lessons and breaks. I toured the school with you. My colleague visited the school's new satellite sixth-form site in Ellesmere Port. We observed teaching and learning in a sample of

classes across the school and examined pupils' work in books. We examined documents, including information about the safeguarding of pupils, the school's self-evaluation document, minutes of meetings of the governing body and information about pupils' achievement. There were no responses to Parent View, Ofsted's inspection survey for parents.