

7 October 2016

Mr Craig Yates  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Yates

### **Short inspection of Buxton Community School**

Following my visit to the school on 13 September 2016 with Julie Robinson, 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 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 took over as headteacher in January 2015. You, the senior leaders and other leaders at the school, and the representatives of the governing body who I met, convincingly demonstrated drive, determination and capacity to improve the school.

Having arrived at the school, you identified correctly a set of important aspects of the achievement, attendance and behaviour of the pupils that needed to be better, in order for the school to sustain the good performance noted at the previous inspection. You 'set out your stall' unequivocally, calling for higher expectations from everyone in terms of what the pupils should be achieving and how well they should be attending and behaving.

Accordingly, you set about making a wide range of changes quickly in leadership roles and responsibilities, staffing arrangements, and ways of working at the school. The changes laid the foundations for the improvements in the pupils' achievement that are now becoming apparent.

The school remains largely and understandably popular with the pupils and the parents, although it is evident that the extent and pace of change has been perplexing for some of them. Nevertheless, the improvements that are the result of the changes that you have made are equally evident. The pupils value the support that they receive from the staff under the new leadership arrangements and the relationships that they develop at the school; as one put it to me, the school 'is a

really nice environment'. This does not mean that they think everything is entirely as it should be.

In our various discussions with them, the pupils demonstrated positive attitudes that reflect the school's core values to treat everyone fairly and with respect. We found examples of good work to develop the pupils spiritually, morally, socially and culturally, and to promote fundamental British values. You do not, however, have a clear strategy for developing such things, or for promoting equalities consistently in all aspects of the school's work.

The staff are supporting you in implementing the vision that you have set out for the school. For example, as one member of staff explained to us, 'It's been a tough year, but a good year'.

As a result of the staff's efforts, the indications are that the decline in the pupils' achievement that occurred in 2015 has been reversed. Though yet to be confirmed in nationally prepared data, the pupils in Year 11 last year and those in the sixth form made good progress; others currently at the school continue to do so.

The improvements in the pupils' achievement have been notable 'across the board', including for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Nevertheless, those latter groups still do not make as much progress as pupils who are not disadvantaged and who do not have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You have begun well, but the task is not yet done.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have put in place clear systems for safeguarding the pupils, which are understood and operated dutifully by the staff. The staff receive training and updates about safeguarding regularly and frequently. As a result, they are aware of government guidance about specific areas of potential concern and are alert to possible warning signs for individual pupils. The governing body keeps good oversight of the school's safeguarding work.

The school's records are well kept, including both the records of staff recruitment checks carried out and the records of support for individual pupils who need additional help. Those latter records show effective work for pupils with high levels of needs.

The school works well with other agencies when necessary. We found good examples of effective work, including with education welfare officers, to support the attendance of pupils and in implementing the government's 'Prevent' duty.

The pupils with whom we spoke, including those who are disadvantaged, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who are among the most able at the school, raised few concerns about bullying. They told us that bullying does occur from time to time, but that when it is reported it is dealt with

robustly by the staff. The pupils value in particular the work of the pastoral leaders and the school counsellor. As a result, they feel safe at the school.

## **Inspection findings**

- You have communicated successfully to the staff a clear direction for the improvement of the school. You have secured in very large part the staff's support for and commitment to the priorities and expectations that you have set out, as a result of the approach that you have taken.
- You have placed the progress and achievement of disadvantaged pupils high among those priorities. The sense of the importance of this issue for the school is permeating the staff.
- You commissioned an external review of the use that the school has made of the pupil premium, which is funding for the support of disadvantaged pupils. You are acting on the report that was produced in April 2016.
- You have put in place a broad range of support for those pupils, such as the 'ASPIRE' team, which are having a positive effect. That is apparent in a significant improvement in the progress made by the pupils in 2016 and in their attendance, both overall and in individual cases where the pupils faced particular barriers to their learning.
- The progress of the disadvantaged pupils is monitored closely.
- These pupils, including those among them who are the most able, feel fully a part of the school. Those with whom we spoke felt able to take part fully in all that is on offer, including extra-curricular activities; they seemed almost surprised that we would ask the question.
- Notwithstanding your efforts to date and the important improvements that they have brought, disadvantaged pupils still do not make as much progress as others nationally. Reducing the difference remains one of the most important challenges for the school.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), who has been at the school little more than 12 months, has changed the culture at the school concerning this aspect of its work. The change has been rapid. It is now more clearly the case than previously that responsibility for the pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities rests with the whole staff.
- The progress of these pupils is monitored diligently. The SENCo has clarified what needs to be done to tackle weaknesses in the provision for and progress of these pupils.
- As a result of good systems for exchanging information about the pupils, the staff follow up promptly on any issues concerning individual pupils.
- The teachers and teaching assistants have been provided with effective training and guidance that has enabled them to improve the quality of teaching for the pupils. As a result, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities making good progress has increased notably.
- Similarly, the proportion of these pupils identified by the school as being at risk of underachieving has reduced.

- The improvements are the result in part of specific and effective work to improve the reading skills of pupils for whom reading is difficult.
- We saw individual examples in lessons of deliberate action by the teachers that enabled pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to make a good contribution to the lessons, which helped the pupils to learn well accordingly.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is another aspect of the school's work that is monitored well by the governing body.
- As with the disadvantaged pupils, however, differences remain in the progress made by and attendance of these pupils, compared with other pupils at the school. The difference between the progress of this group and that of other pupils is, however, less apparent now than it is for the disadvantaged pupils.
- The work of the school to promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and fundamental British values influences the pupils' thinking. The pupils with whom we spoke demonstrated positive views about respecting people different from themselves. They referred to assemblies, personal, social and health education lessons and other activities from which they had learned.
- We witnessed heart-warming occasions in lessons and in discussions with the pupils when they demonstrated patience and respect for and tolerance towards classmates who were experiencing difficulties, either in contributing to a lesson, or with aspects of their learning.
- The pupils reported to us that they hear little by way of racist or homophobic language.
- They spoke with respect about the work of the school's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender group, which promotes positive attitudes to equalities.
- The school's commitment to promoting equalities is not striking in all aspects of its work, or as you walk around the school. The aspects of good practice that we found appear as individual highlights, rather than as examples of a systematic approach.
- While it is the case that the pupils raised with us no major concerns about bullying, including through the anonymised inspection survey, they told us that some instances of name-calling and occasional instances, such as deliberate action by some pupils to interfere with the work of an individual, are not always reported by the pupils themselves, or picked up on by the staff.
- The pupils develop sensible attitudes towards keeping themselves safe. They are helped to do so by effective teaching about dealing with risks that they may face, such as in relation to 'sexting'.
- The pupils value their education. Their conduct around the school when arriving in the morning and during breaks is good and contributes to the school being calm and orderly.
- The school's environment does not reflect its commitment to its values well. The accommodation is kept tidy and manifestly respected by the pupils, but parts of it appear tired and worn and some corridors are dingy and uninviting.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the improvements in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in the last 12 months are secured and the remaining differences between those pupils' progress and attendance and that of others nationally are reduced rapidly
- a more systematic approach to promoting equalities is developed and put into practice, to include an approach to monitoring and evaluating this aspect of the school's work that is as robust as the one used for other outcomes for the pupils.

Yours sincerely

Clive Moss

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, the inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, representatives of the governing body, the designated persons responsible for safeguarding, the special educational needs coordinator, a leader responsible for the pupil premium and leaders with pastoral responsibilities. They also met with representative of the local authority. They made a series of visits to lessons jointly with the headteacher and other senior leaders, including in the sixth form. They talked with pupils about their reading. They looked at a sample of the pupils' work and evaluated information held by the school about the achievement of the pupils. They met with groups of pupils to discuss the work of the school and talked with them also in lessons and informally during breaks. They looked at the views of parents expressed using Parent View and at the results of inspection surveys of the pupils and the staff. They looked at a range of documents, including records of support provided to the pupils, safeguarding records, the school improvement plan and policy documents.