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Wayne Barnett  
Principal  
Mascalls Academy  
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Kent  
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Dear Mr Barnett

### **Short inspection of Mascalls Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 2 November 2016 with Sally Dennison, 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 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since you took up post when the school joined Leigh Academies Trust in September 2015, your ambitious leadership has established an ethos where staff are committed to driving standards up. Your clear expectations have resulted in a discernible change to the culture of the school. Staff strive to provide the best possible learning opportunities for the pupils in their care. Teachers and support staff feel valued. They work effectively together to embrace the change that is raising standards even further.

Your school is a happy place to be. Staff expectations for behaviour and learning are consistently high. This is helping pupils to make increasingly good progress across a broad range of subjects. Pupils get on well and help each other with any difficulties they may have, both in and out of lessons. The number of pupils being excluded from school for a fixed term has gone down steadily as a result of the effective systems and sanctions which are in place for managing behaviour. Pupils say that the consistent use of these systems across the school helps them to focus on behaving in ways which help them to learn.

Since the previous inspection in May 2012, leaders have continued to improve the school from its secure starting point. The areas for improvement identified at the

last inspection have been acted on effectively. Expertise from across the trust helps to validate the assessments staff make about pupils' progress. Staff know pupils well, and understand their needs and next steps for learning. Teachers and leaders use assessment information consistently well to keep teaching focused on making progress rapid for all groups of pupils. Pupils use the feedback they regularly receive across their subjects to help them improve their work. Strengthened and improving results across the 16 to 19 study programme show that courses meet students' needs and indicate that careers information and guidance supports Year 11 pupils well in making appropriate choices for their post-16 study.

You and your leadership team recognise that there is still work to be done to make your school even better, and are clear about priorities moving forward. The progress of some groups of pupils, while improving rapidly, is not yet as good as it should be. Boys do not achieve as well as girls, and progress in mathematics is not currently as strong as it is in English. Pupils who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have not achieved as well as others in the past. Evidence shows that these groups of pupils are beginning to catch up with their peers in school and nationally.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your staff have effective systems in place that keep pupils safe. The trust supports you well in ensuring that your policies and practice reflect current requirements, and you review these arrangements regularly. You keep appropriate records of the checks you carry out on adults that work in the school, and all staff receive regular training about their responsibilities for safeguarding. Leaders work with experts from outside the school to support pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable, and ensure that this work is documented carefully.

Pupils report that they feel safe at school, and staff help them if they have difficulties or concerns. Parents support that view, with almost all agreeing that their children feel safe and happy at school. Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet, and demonstrate a good awareness of the risks in the world around them. They understand what it means to be a good citizen in modern Britain, and they uphold these values.

### **Inspection findings**

- Leaders evaluate the school's performance accurately and regularly, using support from the trust to confirm and challenge their findings. They understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and are determined in their efforts to make progress with the priorities that have been identified.
- Leaders have acted decisively to strengthen the wider leadership of the school. As a result, achievement in mathematics and for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving rapidly.
- Becoming part of Leigh Academies Trust in September 2015 has added rigour and challenge to leaders' work, which is helping to accelerate the rate

at which the school is improving. Leaders are increasingly accountable for the welfare and progress of pupils as a result of recent changes to the school's leadership structure.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have not historically achieved as well as their peers across a broad range of subjects. The new special educational needs coordinator has taken appropriate action which is helping these pupils to catch up. As a result, pupils currently in the school are making more rapid progress.
- In the past, boys have not made as much progress as girls. Although girls make increasingly strong progress which is above the national average, teachers' expectations for boys have not always been high enough. Staff training specific to the needs of boys is now improving the quality and quantity of work that they are producing, which is accelerating their progress.
- The most able pupils make increasingly good progress across their range of subjects. They make better progress than their peers nationally in every year group except Year 11, and school performance information shows an improving trend over time. School leaders have put a programme of support in place to improve the performance of the most able disadvantaged pupils, whose progress is not currently good enough compared with their peers.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good across the school. Leaders evaluate the learning in lessons accurately, and are ambitious for it to be even better. High-quality training supports individual teachers and groups of teachers in developing their classroom practice.
- Clear action by school leaders is addressing the legacy of underperformance in mathematics. Staffing and leadership have been strengthened recently, which has already improved the quality of teaching across this subject area. School performance information shows that pupils' progress in mathematics is now improving towards the high standards they already achieve in English.
- Feedback is used consistently across the school to help pupils improve their work. Although pupils respond to feedback as a matter of routine, leaders recognise that improving the quality of this dialogue could make progress even more rapid, and are taking steps to address this.
- Pupils attend school regularly, with overall absence rates below the national average. Historically, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have been absent more frequently than their peers. Robust systems have tackled this well, with the new attendance leader working proactively with parents as needed. As a result, attendance for both these groups of pupils is showing consistent improvement.
- Behaviour is good across the school because of clear systems that are understood and adhered to well by pupils. Consequently, school behaviour records show a declining trend in incidents that need to be escalated to a higher level of sanction. The percentage of pupils who are excluded from school is low, and is decreasing for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Pupils across the ability range read with confidence and fluency, which enables them to access the curriculum well. Leaders use funding to ensure

that disadvantaged pupils have appropriate access to a range of texts, although a small number of pupils did not give inspectors a strong sense of how reading is promoted across the school. Pupils use their literacy skills effectively to support their learning in other subjects, such as when learning grammar in GCE A-level Spanish lessons.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress of key groups of pupils, and more generally in mathematics, continues to accelerate, so that they achieve in line with their peers nationally.

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

Yours sincerely

Kathryn Moles  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors visited a number of lessons with school senior leaders to observe learning, talk to pupils and look at their work. Inspectors met with a range of senior leaders, middle leaders, members of staff, pupils, governors and representatives from Leigh Academies Trust. Inspectors reviewed safeguarding arrangements, including the record of recruitment checks, safeguarding and child protection policy, staff training and anonymised case studies about pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Inspectors also considered a variety of school documentation, including policies, the academy performance agreement, records of checks on the quality of teaching and learning and pupil progress information. Inspectors also took into account 104 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire and 99 free text responses.

During the visit, inspectors focused on the work that leaders are doing to improve the progress of key groups of pupils in the school. This particularly referred to disadvantaged pupils, boys, the most able and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Inspectors also considered the effectiveness of teaching, particularly in mathematics, and the difference it is making to pupil progress. Inspectors considered how effective the culture of safeguarding is within the school, and particularly how leaders are improving attendance of key groups of pupils.