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Mr Michael Kent
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Dear Mr Kent

Short inspection of Netherhall Learning Campus High School

Following my visit to the school on 1 November 2016 with Tudor Griffiths, 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 November 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are resolute that pupils should reach their potential and this continues to pay dividends. Senior and middle leaders have been successful in helping pupils to raise their aspirations and realise their ambitions. Adults' and teachers' tenacity in helping the most vulnerable pupils to overcome social and domestic difficulties is driven by their deep and passionate commitment to the community. Governors offer sound support but recognise the level of challenge they offer could be sharper.

The school is particularly successful in securing a calm and productive working environment. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well, particularly that of pupils who have identified behaviour difficulties. Teachers are patient and skilful in using a mixture of appropriate praise, encouragement and redirection to help pupils to maintain a good work ethos. As a result, most groups of pupils make the progress they should and often make better progress. Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do equally well.

You and your team monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' work carefully. As a result you spot and act swiftly on any slippage in terms of teachers' performance or pupils' underachievement. For example, you have taken firm action combined with effective support to improve the quality of teaching in humanities subjects. While teaching in history and geography remains variable in quality, pupils' work in books

shows that it is improving. You also know that the most able pupils have not been making as much progress as others. As a result of senior and middle leaders' coaching, teachers are becoming more skilled at offering a more appropriate level of challenge, which is leading to improved progress.

Middle leaders' skills in evaluating how well different groups of pupils are doing are improving all the time. For example, they keep a close eye on how well boys are doing and take effective steps to make sure that teaching engages them. Subject leaders value senior leaders' support and coaching in honing their skills. They follow the established calendar of quality assurance activities assiduously, making sure they consider assessment information, observations of learning, the work in pupils' books and discussions with pupils to gather an accurate picture of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. This group of middle leaders works very well together and they are keen to try new ways of improving their work. They recognise that they could be more precise in pinpointing their monitoring to look at the progress of specific groups such as the most able disadvantaged pupils.

The progress pupils make in English is better than published results would suggest. This is because you and your team decided to enter pupils early for their GCSE examination to help them build up resilience in examination practice. This was a successful tactic because pupils gained confidence and subsequently achieved higher grades. Consequently, pupils were able to access the employment, training or further education courses that matched their aspirations. However, you recognise that this confidence building can be achieved through internal examinations and you are no longer using this approach.

At the previous inspection, the school was asked to make sure that pupils knew exactly how to improve their work. Teachers now use the school's marking policy consistently and pupils' work usually improves as a result. For example, in Year 10 English books, the teacher asked pupils to make sure that they added quotations to support their views about 'An Inspector Calls' and pupils successfully weaved in appropriate quotations in the subsequent tasks.

Pupils' writing skills across the school have improved. Pupils are expected to write full answers and they are challenged to think carefully about their answers. Improving pupils' speaking skills is proving to be a harder nut to crack but staff are persistent in tackling the underlying causes of pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Pupils' progress in mathematics is particularly strong and pupils' work shows that other subjects, such as science, are sustaining a good rate of improvement.

Learners in the studio school are making consistently good progress. Leaders effectively promote learners' high ambitions. Strong careers information, advice and guidance can be seen in learners' destinations, which closely match their career aspirations. The number of learners who improve their English and mathematics grades continues to rise year on year. The significant number of learners who come to the studio school from other schools are supported in settling in quickly, with learning coaches on hand to encourage learners' good attendance and a professional approach to their studies.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have made sure that the safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of a high quality. The school works very closely with other agencies to make sure that vulnerable pupils are supported so that they come to school able to concentrate on their work. Staff maintain strong relationships with families when they are going through difficult times. Governors make sure that policies are reviewed regularly so that any lessons learned are acted on swiftly. However, policies on the school's website do not always reflect this rigour.

Staff training is thorough and robust. Teachers are acutely aware of any warning signs and they are confident in dealing appropriately with incidents or pupils' disclosures. The school has a strong culture in which pupils are supported in learning about and managing risks for themselves. For example, staff are very confident in tackling tricky subjects and making sure that pupils have a safe place to debate their emerging ideas. This is particularly strong where there is a risk of pupils developing extremist or prejudiced views. Pupils demonstrate through their behaviour their tolerance and respect for those with religions and beliefs different from their own.

Inspection findings

- Senior leaders have developed robust systems to support and challenge middle leaders. Files which contain the middle leaders' analysis of their regular monitoring activities help to focus professional conversations and ensure that any underachievement or dips in teachers' performance are spotted and tackled. Leaders acknowledge that middle leaders' evaluations are not sharply focused on particular groups such as the most able pupils who are also disadvantaged.
- Pupil premium funding has been used in the main to support pupils who are disadvantaged and least able by reducing class sizes. This has been successful and the low-and middle-attaining disadvantaged pupils make strong progress. Leaders and governors recognise that there is more to do to support those who are disadvantaged and most able in unpicking their individual barriers to success.
- Progress in English throughout the school is improving. Work in pupils' books shows that they are tackling challenging texts and developing thoughtful approaches.
- As pupils leave the school, they go on to appropriate destinations because the careers advice they get is effective. The school is committed to finding the right place for pupils rather than allowing them to take inappropriate courses in the studio school.

- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are strengths. Teachers use effective tactics to re-engage pupils who drift off from concentrating on their work. Behaviour logs and records of bullying and racist incidents demonstrate that prejudicial bullying is rare and tackled effectively by confident staff. Pupils settle down to work quickly and expect to work hard.
- Pupils' attendance is improving and it is now closer to the national average. Tight monitoring through fortnightly attendance meetings gives staff an accurate view of how well pupils who are persistently absent are improving their attendance. Leaders have been successful in diminishing the differences between the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and others, as well as improving the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Pupils say they feel safe and that staff respond quickly if they have a problem they want to discuss. They are respectful of others and have confidence that staff will support them in dealing with any unpleasant name-calling or bullying should it occur. The rate of fixed-term exclusions has decreased and there are few pupils who are repeatedly excluded because the support systems to help excluded pupils settle back into school life are strong.
- Learners' attitudes to learning are strong in the studio school, where there is a purposeful and professional attitude to work. Learners value the positive ethos of the school, especially those who have joined the studio school from other schools. There are compelling examples of learners who have had disrupted education at secondary school developing positive attitudes and quickly making up lost ground.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- subject leaders' monitoring is more precisely focused on groups who are not making as much progress as others, especially the most able pupils who are also disadvantaged
- teaching in humanities subjects matches the high standards of other subjects
- pupil premium funding is used effectively to support most-able pupils who are also disadvantaged
- pupils' confidence in speaking at length is improved
- the school's website is reviewed regularly to meet requirements
- governors hold leaders accountable for the performance of different groups of pupils in a more challenging way.

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

Yours sincerely

Joan Hewitt
Senior Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, my colleague and I pursued the following lines of enquiry:

- Is safeguarding effective?
- Are pupils making consistently good progress across the curriculum, particularly in English and for the most able pupils and disadvantaged pupils?
- Are learners making sufficient progress on academic and vocational courses, and in the English and mathematics study programmes?
- Have leaders and teachers tackled the areas highlighted in the previous inspection report effectively so that pupils understand how to improve their work, answer questions fully and are challenged appropriately?
- Are leaders at all levels successfully evaluating the quality of the school's work and using those evaluations to provide a consistently good quality of education?

I met with you, the executive headteacher, your senior leaders, six subject leaders and the leader of the studio school. The other inspector met with a group of pupils and staff responsible for vocational subjects, behaviour, and attendance and safeguarding. I also met with three governors. Together with senior leaders, we visited classrooms to observe teaching and look at pupils' work. We also looked in depth at the work and progress of pupils over time. Consideration was given to 30 responses from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. We evaluated recent information in relation to pupils' progress throughout the school, the school's self-evaluation document, the school development plan and your analysis of the quality of teaching, including a sample of middle leaders' monitoring records. My colleague reviewed documentation and records about how you keep pupils safe.