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Mr David Lord
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Lord

Short inspection of Ryburn Valley High School

Following my visit to the school on 9 May 2017 with Ofsted Inspector Michael Cook, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You have created a culture in which pupils and staff have excellent relationships based on mutual respect. Your ethos of 'everyone matters and every dream counts' is firmly embedded. Pupils value your support and support each other on their journeys through education. Parents, carers and staff are overwhelmingly positive about the quality of leadership and the experience of pupils on a day-to-day basis. A real strength is the extra-curricular provision, which affords pupils numerous opportunities to develop their skills and try new things.

Pupils' conduct in lessons and around school is exemplary. One member of staff commented, 'I have never been to a school where so many pupils hold doors open for staff and one another.' Pupils are polite and courteous and want to achieve well. They take pride in their work and are continuing to make good progress. They are confident and articulate.

Following your appointment in September 2013, you have ensured that your vision for the school is communicated well to staff, pupils, parents and carers. Your staff are in full support of the journey that your school is undertaking. Along with your senior leaders, you have ensured that your assessment systems are robust and your curriculum is appropriate for your pupils. You have strengthened the system for

performance management to ensure a constant focus on pupils' outcomes and, through this, you have improved the quality of teaching and middle leadership.

During the inspection, we agreed that there are areas that you are still working to improve. These include continuing to improve the quality of teaching and learning, reducing the number of fixed-term exclusions, improving retention in the sixth form and, although attendance overall is above the national average, work remains to be done to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. Leaders know pupils well and pupils say that they are confident in seeking support from adults if they need help.

Staff undergo annual safeguarding training and receive regular updates throughout the academic year. Consequently, staff have a strong awareness of how to keep pupils safe. Links with parents are strengthened through the work of the welfare officer and this is helping to ensure good communication. Pastoral staff ensure that robust checks are carried out when pupils are absent.

Pupils say, and records show, that bullying incidents are rare and have declined over the last three years. Pupils, staff and parents agree that, if bullying does occur, teachers deal with it swiftly and effectively so that there are no repeat incidents.

Inspection findings

- Following some disappointing outcomes for disadvantaged pupils over time, leaders are taking appropriate action to improve outcomes for this group of pupils. A number of effective strategies are in place which are leading to better progress compared to the last academic year. Evidence for this progress is in pupils' work, pupils' attitudes to learning and from school information about their progress. Some initiatives are very recent and it is too soon to see their impact, for example from the 'Toddlers to Teens' project.
- Leaders undertake a programme of departmental reviews and quality assurance that ensures that areas for improvement are identified and actioned. Departments that have underperformed are reviewed and supported first, to ensure that progress improves for pupils. Through this, pupils are making better progress in subjects such as history and Spanish compared to that made in the last academic year.
- The curriculum is appropriate and all subjects are available to all pupils. Pupils receive support and guidance in choosing their GCSE options to ensure that their choices link to their future aspirations and their ability. In Year 8, pupils have the opportunity to take part in taster sessions so that they can try out subjects that are new to them, such as health and social care and business studies. This gives them confidence in making the right choices.

- Leaders of teaching and learning have robust procedures in place to determine the quality of teaching in the school. From a range of evidence, they implement a programme of appropriate professional development opportunities which cater for different needs and allow all teachers to continually develop their practice. Performance management arrangements closely take into account pupils' outcomes. Leaders agree, however, that further work is needed to ensure that teaching excites and enthuses all pupils to reach their maximum potential.
- The impact of steps taken to improve attendance is seen in the reduction of the persistent absence of pupils who have an education, health and care plan and those who are disadvantaged. This has been achieved through targeted spending of additional funds, for example on employing an education welfare officer. When attendance has improved in the school, so has progress. School leaders recognise that there is further work to do to sustain previous improvements made to the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.
- Students in the sixth form are making good progress and this is a continually improving picture. Programmes of study are appropriate and well adapted to meet the needs of individuals, including those who have an education, health and care plan. Attendance is high and, for the past two years, all pupils have progressed to appropriate employment, education or training, with a number above the national average progressing to higher education. Students who join the sixth form without a good pass in GCSE English or mathematics receive additional tuition and make progress in their resits. Leaders have taken appropriate action to strengthen support and guidance on course selection, which has led to an improvement in the retention of students on their course. However, leaders recognise that this work needs to continue.
- Behaviour has improved over time and pupils say that bad behaviour rarely interferes with their learning. Fixed-term exclusions of pupils from school remain above the national average but incidents of extreme behaviour have reduced due to appropriate support being in place for pupils. The school does not use internal exclusion. Pupils who return from exclusion enter the access centre where they undertake a personalised programme for reintegration into lessons. Leaders agree that there is more to do to develop this programme and reduce the number of exclusions.
- The staff survey and parents' and carers' responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are overwhelmingly positive and in support of the school. Parents and carers were very clear that they are very happy with the work of the pastoral support teams and the special educational needs department. One parent described the support received as 'life-changing'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- strategies continue to develop and become embedded to improve attendance for disadvantaged pupils and to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions
- improvements to the quality of teaching and learning continue so that all pupils

are enthused and excited about their learning and achieve well

- leaders of the sixth form build on the recent improvements to guidance and support given to students in selecting their sixth-form courses, in order to improve the retention of students on their courses.

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

Yours sincerely

Debbie Redshaw

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, your senior leaders and some of your middle leaders, governors and pupils. We gathered a range of evidence from conducting observations of learning and from scrutinising pupils' work jointly with your senior leaders. The inspection team checked and evaluated documents, including your child protection policy, safeguarding records, school self-evaluation, school improvement plans, minutes from governors' meetings, evaluations of the quality of teaching and learning, performance management information and attendance information. Inspectors also took account of 181 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 82 responses to the staff questionnaire.