

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Matt Snape
Headteacher
Marden High School
Hartington Road
Cullercoats
North Shields
Tyne and Wear
NE30 3RZ

Dear Mr Snape

Short inspection of Marden High School

Following my visit to the school on 5 July 2017 with Stephen Mckenzie, 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 December 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 are resolute in your ambition to raise pupils' expectations of what they can achieve. You are ably supported by a team of dedicated and knowledgeable senior and middle leaders who share your ambition for improvement. You have developed a school that knows itself well and have correctly identified where improvements should be made. You know, for example, that while the large majority of pupils achieve well during their time at the school, this is not the case for everybody. You are determined to remedy this and ensure all pupils benefit from high-quality teaching. This is reflected in the priority you are giving to raising standards and the achievement of all pupils.

You have developed a culture of school improvement and, alongside other leaders, have introduced effective systems for challenging underperformance of staff and pupils. You rigorously hold senior and middle leaders and staff to account, and as a result, standards are rising.

Governance at the school is a strength. Governors take a measured, strategic approach to their roles. They have worked with you to develop a very clear strategy on what the school needs to do to support staff and ensure that pupils make the progress they should. Governors are mindful that their role is to both support and

challenge, which they do with sensitivity and incisiveness.

You, other leaders and governors have worked tirelessly to embed a caring, nurturing and inclusive ethos. This is evident and permeates the school. The school has a calm and purposeful atmosphere and relationships between staff and pupils are positive and productive. One member of staff reflected the views of many in stating, 'Staff care about the pupils here, a great strength is the community spirit and the commitment of staff to give up their time to help pupils.' As a result, the vast majority of pupils show positive attitudes to learning and are keen to improve their own learning. They focus well in class and are respectful of others' views and responses. Pupils have confidence in the staff, they value what they do for them and they strongly believe staff care for them and want them to do well. Consequently, staff and pupils are proud to be part of the school and morale is high.

The range of extra-curricular activities provided by the school enhances the quality of pupils' education and gives them opportunities to develop their social and cultural skills. For example, pupils speak excitedly about their experiences and involvement in the school's musical production, and drama, creative writing and sporting activities they can opt for.

Following the previous inspection, it was identified that pupils would make more rapid progress if the quality of teaching was improved further. Since your appointment in September 2016, you and other leaders have placed high importance on the professional development of staff. The rich and varied programme of training is helping teachers to improve and share best practice more widely and innovatively. You have built a culture of continuous improvement and, consequently, the quality of teaching is improving. In addition, the effective monitoring systems you have introduced have placed increased trust in middle leaders. They appreciate and value this and feel supported to lead their teams more effectively. Although there has been some recent staff turbulence, particularly within mathematics, this is now stabilising and pupils are making better progress overall. However, you recognise that not all teachers are consistently using information about pupils' progress to plan activities that develop and challenge pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding sufficiently.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding and the welfare of pupils are a strength of the school. The designated safeguarding lead is thorough in following through any concerns in a timely manner. This ensures that pupils who are vulnerable or at risk are kept safe through regular engagement with staff in the school, parents and appropriate external agencies.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding training for staff takes place regularly and frequent updates are shared about how to keep children safe. These updates include identifying different forms of abuse and how to deal effectively and appropriately with any concerns staff have about pupils.

Records demonstrate that staff in the school carry out thorough checks to ensure that the school is a safe place to be. Responses to Ofsted's questionnaires for staff and parents were positive in stating that pupils are safe and well cared for in school. Pupils also state that they feel safe and supported at the school.

Inspection findings

- You, senior and middle leaders and governors provide clear and strong leadership in improving the quality of teaching. The systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching are having a positive impact on improving teachers' practice and consequently pupils' progress.
- All heads of department are responsible for planning and sharing strategies to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils; for example, 'departmental case conferences' have been successful in focusing on individual pupils, the barriers each may be facing and appropriate interventions, such as academic mentoring or additional catch-up sessions.
- Heads of year now have increased responsibility for monitoring and mentoring disadvantaged pupils' academic and pastoral achievements. They form purposeful relationships with these pupils and ensure that they are on track to achieve their targets as well as care for their social and emotional well-being. As a result, in the main, disadvantaged pupils are making better progress.
- You and other leaders have established and facilitated innovative ways to share best practice. Staff appreciate the additional training they receive and one member of staff stated, 'New systems are a lot more supportive and developmental; staff know the direction of travel.'
- Pupils access a well-rounded and interesting curriculum. This is because leaders take steps to ensure that pupils' subject choices prepare them with the skills and knowledge they need for their future aspirations. Pupils enjoy the subjects they study. All pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, access interviews with their form tutors, subject staff and careers advisers which enable them to make informed decisions about the subjects they are going to study during key stage 4. A minority of pupils benefit from a tailored curriculum using alternative provision. This ensures that these pupils remain in full-time education and develop appropriate skills by the end of key stage 4, which prepares them well for future education, employment or training.
- Leaders' efforts to improve the quality of teaching, the curriculum and outcomes for all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, are having a positive impact. School assessment information and work in pupils' books indicate that there are no obvious differences between the current progress made by disadvantaged pupils and other pupils. Nevertheless, leaders are aware that not all staff are using information about pupils' progress consistently well to plan activities that meet the needs of and challenge all pupils. They are checking this carefully to ensure that recent improvements are sustained.
- You and other leaders have been successful in emphasising the importance of good attendance with pupils and parents. In order to improve attendance, leaders have adopted a 'face-to-face' approach through regular mentor meetings

with vulnerable pupils. Staff are taking time to work with pupils to build their confidence and self-esteem and, where appropriate, using reward competitions. As a result of such actions, attendance has improved for some individuals and overall attendance for disadvantaged pupils is showing signs of improvement. Nevertheless, leaders recognise that there is still work to do to sustain these improvements.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff use information about pupils' progress to plan activities that develop and challenge pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding more consistently
- the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is in line with or better than that of all pupils 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 North Tyneside. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Darren Stewart
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Meetings took place with you and members of your senior and middle leadership teams. Meetings also took place with a group of governors, a group of staff and groups of pupils from Years 7 and 8 and Years 9 and 10.

Inspectors examined the school's self-evaluation document, school development plan and records concerning teaching and learning, attendance, exclusions and destinations. They scrutinised a variety of sources of information, including the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures, records of checks that leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children, and the school's own assessment of the progress it is making.

Inspectors, with members of the senior leadership team, observed learning in a range of year groups. Inspectors reviewed work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils about their learning during lessons. Inspectors took account of the 23 responses to Ofsted's online parental questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also considered the 27 staff questionnaire responses and the 52 pupil questionnaire responses.