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Mrs Gaynor F Gorman
Principal
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Dear Mrs Gorman

Short inspection of Lostock Hall Academy

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 2018 with Dympna Woods, 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Overall, pupils make good progress and reach standards that are higher than seen nationally. This has been achieved despite significant challenges and an unsettled history for the school in recent years.

You have managed and led necessary changes well, especially when they have not always been welcome. This has resulted in a team of staff that work together for the good of the pupils. Your leadership team is particularly cohesive and has contributed to recent successes. For example, the most able pupils achieve better than their peers nationally, the quality of provision in mathematics continues to improve and attendance remains strong.

Since the last inspection, most of the areas for development have been successfully acted upon. Literacy is given a high profile and the pupils are very aware of this. Much professional development has been devoted to literacy and it is embedded in teachers' everyday practice. Leaders are continuing to develop this aspect of provision and are making training available to all support staff.

Teachers' questioning makes pupils think and is shaped and moulded so as to meet the needs of pupils. Questioning of the most able pupils is particularly effective and the evidence of this can be seen in the strong progress that they make across the school. Teachers use these questioning skills as a tool by which they can check pupils' understanding.

The leadership of technology has changed since the last inspection and outcomes have improved and are being sustained.

The achievement of disadvantaged pupils is a long-standing challenge. While standards for these pupils have not declined, they have not improved quickly enough. A review of the pupil premium funding was scheduled for the week after this inspection. Much greater rigour in the evaluation of its impact is necessary. It is not always clear which strategies make the most difference. Although the progress made by disadvantaged pupils in 2017 was below the national average, this masks the improvements made by these pupils in some subjects, such as mathematics and science. It is these improvements which demonstrate that leaders have the capacity to make the necessary changes.

The difference between the achievement of boys and girls is decreasing, although it is still wider than the difference between boys and girls nationally. The girls at the school make rapid progress across a range of subjects. Where strategies that have focused on raising standards for boys have been implemented, for example in English, the impact has been positive.

Governors support you in your leadership of the school. They ask the right questions and take action when necessary. However, plans are not always focused and specific enough to help them hold you and your team to account.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have established a large team, which includes the school counsellor and attendance officer, and works together to keep pupils safe. Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe and embrace diversity. Referral systems are timely and supportive and the records that are kept are thorough and effective. Statutory safeguarding arrangements are effective.

Inspection findings

- The curriculum is designed so as to meet the needs of pupils and to develop and deepen their knowledge, skills and understanding. For most pupils, this leads to good achievement, especially for the most able. Despite leaders working hard to promote languages as a valued and beneficial subject and skill, the uptake of modern foreign languages is extremely low. This is limiting pupils' opportunities in the future.
- The number of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is very low. Leaders provide these pupils with the support that they need so as to develop their learning. The progress that they make is generally good. Where it is not, it is because of wider issues that are beyond the control of the school.
- Very few pupils are absent and the number of exclusions is low. This means that pupils are able to benefit from the good teaching in the school and they make

good progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress made by disadvantaged pupils improves rapidly
- the difference in the achievement between boys and girls continues to decrease
- the work to promote modern foreign languages continues
- the planning and evaluation of actions to bring about improvements are more rigorous.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, inspectors met with you and your senior leaders and members of the governing body. With senior leaders, inspectors conducted a learning walk, visited classes and had the opportunity to speak to pupils and see their work. Inspectors met with a group of pupils. There were 53 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire for parents, 51 pupil responses and 46 staff responses. Inspectors scrutinised your school improvement planning, behaviour, bullying and exclusion records, the single central record and other safeguarding procedures and practices. We also reviewed a wide range of documentation and held discussions about the curriculum, pupil premium and SEN provision.