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14 March 2018

Mr Stephen Rhodes  
Headteacher  
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High Street  
Kimberworth  
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South Yorkshire  
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Dear Mr Rhodes

### **Short inspection of Winterhill School**

Following my visit to the school on 27 February 2018 with Tim Johnson and Stephen Crossley, Ofsted Inspectors, 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 January 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment you have developed an effective senior leadership group and together you make accurate evaluations of the strengths of the school and areas that you need to develop further. Between September 2016 and September 2017, you strengthened your team further through the appointments of senior leaders responsible for teaching and learning, special educational needs and safeguarding. You have also introduced associate senior leader roles to support the opportunities for staff professional development. You have ensured that leadership across the school has maintained a robust focus on the progress of pupils and, as a result, the progress of pupils has remained strong since the last inspection.

You and your team have tackled the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report successfully. At the last inspection, you were asked to increase the proportions of students that achieve well in humanities and modern foreign languages. Since your appointment you acted swiftly and ensured that the quality of teaching and learning improved in those areas. You supported the staff in humanities and modern foreign languages through appropriate professional development and implemented robust quality assurance systems. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning and outcomes in these subjects are improving.

At the last inspection you were asked to improve the quality of teaching so that all is at least good and more is outstanding through better teacher guidance, better use of

assessment in planning learning and higher levels of challenge in lessons. You appointed an experienced senior leader to lead teaching and learning and introduced rigorous systems for using assessment information when teachers plan learning activities. You acted swiftly, and with resilience, to eradicate any weak teaching. You also focused strongly on staff development and sharing good practice, not only within your school, but also through effective collaborations with neighbouring schools. You implemented a robust quality assurance system, led by middle leaders. As a result, all teaching across the school is now effective.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a strong safeguarding culture in the school. Your senior leader responsible for safeguarding is experienced, knowledgeable, proactive and vigilant. As a result, she has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. The school has effective referral procedures and communication with external agencies is good overall. This means that information is shared effectively and in a timely way. Staff and governors receive appropriate training in child protection. You and your team ensure that you carry out appropriate checks on the suitability of all staff who work with pupils.

When inspectors met with pupils, they reported that they feel safe, know who to go to if they have any concerns and are confident that staff will deal effectively with any problems. Inspection evidence also supports this. Pupils know how to stay safe online. Pupils say that bullying sometimes does happen, but when it does, teachers and senior leaders tackle it quickly. Some parents are less confident in the school's handling of bullying and about behaviour in school. However, you are not complacent and continually review and improve the support that is in place for pupils. The relationships between staff and pupils are positive. As a result, behaviour in the vast majority of lessons and conduct around the school site are good.

### **Inspection findings**

- You ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all learners, including the disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. You review the curriculum frequently in order to provide pupils with the opportunity to achieve their potential. You recently introduced a new curriculum model for pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 (key stage 3), encouraging them to become more reflective and independent learners. Pupils are supportive of and talk positively about the topics they are studying, such as structures, balance, adaptability, collaboration, discovery, creativity, communication, relationships, belief, respect, competition and curiosity. Assessment in key stage 3 takes the form of the 'Winterhill steps' and is becoming embedded across all departments. Consequently, it is too early to fully evaluate the impact of this curriculum review. Other curriculum reviews have led to an increase in pupils choosing history and computer science.
- You and your leaders mapped rigorously the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across the curriculum for all age groups. There is a comprehensive programme of study which includes learning about the fundamental British values and

extensive careers advice and guidance. All pupils have access to specialist careers advice, in addition to an extensive range of support and guidance activities. As a result, the progression rates into post-16 education are close to local and national averages and improving.

- You have established a carefully designed and targeted professional development programme for staff, which is clearly linked to performance management. Staff value the support they receive, along with opportunities for sharing good practice and professional development. They support your relentless drive for continuous improvement. You have taken robust steps to eradicate weak teaching and, in some departments, this has led in the past to some instability in staffing, particularly in science. All subject areas are now fully staffed with specialist teachers. Links with neighbouring schools are effective in improving standards in teaching and learning.
- You and your senior leaders have put in place thorough monitoring systems which show that the quality of teaching is good and continuously improving. As a team, you carry out frequent monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning and check the impact on the progress of pupils. Teachers have relevant information about pupils' starting points and assessment information so that they can plan learning to meet all pupils' needs. Middle leaders are leading on the quality assurance processes. As a result, the vast majority of teachers provide more challenge for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The vast majority of teachers use targeted questioning effectively to probe understanding and support pupils' progress. You and your leaders are aware of the small variation that exists between departments and you are working closely with middle leaders to support staff in improving their practice. As a result, all teaching across the school is now strong.
- The progress of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, has been strong and consistently above national averages. More specifically, overall pupils' progress has been significantly above average for the last two years. Progress for disadvantaged pupils has been in the top 20% compared to all disadvantaged groups nationally. Attainment in science dipped in 2017 due to instability in staffing, but you have successfully tackled these issues and current assessment information indicates improvement. Similarly, school assessment information indicates that the strong progress is continuing and further improving for all year groups and most groups of pupils.
- You and your leadership team are working tirelessly to embed a culture of good attendance across the school. Your attendance team is working hard on a range of intervention strategies for a number of pupils. As a result, attendance for almost all groups of pupils is already improving since last year. You recognise that there is still some work to do with disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities to further improve their attendance.
- In November 2016, you introduced a new behaviour system and heightened expectations. You and your staff model the positive behaviour you want all pupils to display and use the rewards system to good effect. As a result, the overall behaviour of pupils, both in lessons and around the site, is good. However, there is a small number of pupils who struggle to respond to the heightened expectations. This led to an increase in fixed-term exclusions in 2017. You and your leaders acted swiftly to provide support for these pupils and ensure that they receive a personalised

curriculum to help them achieve their potential. You and your leaders are relentless in promoting high expectations from pupils and high aspirations. As a result of these strategies, fixed-term exclusions have significantly reduced this year. However, you acknowledge that this trend needs to continue and exclusions to be reduced even further.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to improve the attendance of groups of pupils, particularly pupils eligible for free school meals and those with SEN and/or disabilities
- they continue to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions of groups of pupils, particularly pupils eligible for free school meals and those with SEN and/or disabilities

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

Yours sincerely

Dimitris Spiliotis  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, inspectors met with you and your senior leaders, middle leaders, the chair of the local governing body and your school improvement partner. Inspectors also had a telephone conversation with the chair of the board of trustees.

The inspectors met with a range of pupils from Year 7 to Year 10. Inspectors conducted tours of the school with senior leaders, looking at pupils' work and observing their learning. The inspectors also conducted a scrutiny of pupils' work, jointly with senior leaders, in a range of subjects.

The inspection team scrutinised and evaluated a range of documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and school improvement. Inspectors also took account of the 20 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including the three extended responses from parents. They also took account of the 56 responses to the staff questionnaire.