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Ms Helen Hubert
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Dear Ms Hubert

Short inspection of The Derby High School

Following my visit to the school on 28 March 2018 with Osama Abdul Rahim, 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since then, the school has experienced changes in staffing and leadership. Prior to you joining the school, there was also a period of interim leadership during which time the deputy headteacher was acting headteacher. Since your appointment in April 2016, you have continued the journey of improvement. You leave no stone unturned in your quest to improve the life chances of pupils at The Derby High School. You are ably supported by your senior leadership team and governors.

You are committed to ensuring that all pupils receive a good quality of education. Staff share your vision and welcome your open and consultative approach. They value the many opportunities that you give them for their professional development. Middle leaders say that they are more accountable for their roles. Your self-evaluation of the school is honest and accurate and identifies key areas for further improvement. You have continued to improve teaching and learning and have put in place effective systems to track pupils' progress. In 2016 and 2017, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, made above-average progress from their starting points.

The school's motto, 'excellence, tradition and imagination', underpins everything. You and your staff team have created an inclusive and caring learning community. Pupils are polite and welcoming and wear their uniforms with pride. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they enjoy learning and that staff 'go the extra mile' for them. Relationships between staff and pupils are based on mutual respect.

Pupils from many different backgrounds work well together in lessons. The curriculum meets the needs of pupils. Pupils' learning opportunities are enriched by visitors, such as an astronaut coming into the school, and trips to careers events, museums and universities. Pupils are grateful for the wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as football and rounders. They are also involved in charity work. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to develop their leadership skills, for example through being school prefects.

Parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and said that they would recommend the school to others. One parent said, 'Teachers genuinely care.' Another parent commented: 'My child is happy, well supported and is making excellent progress.'

Since the last inspection, there has been significant change in the composition of the governing body. Governors are passionate about the school and highly effective. One commented, 'We want pupils to be happy and safe and make a great contribution to society.' Governors know the strengths and areas for improvement of the school well. They use their wide range of skills and expertise effectively to support and challenge leaders through their regular visits.

At the previous inspection, the inspectors asked leaders to ensure that pupils made faster progress in mathematics. Since the last inspection, the mathematics department has experienced a number of staffing and leadership changes which have had a detrimental impact on teaching, learning and pupils' progress. You have now brought stability to the department and have strengthened teaching. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and use assessment information well to plan learning that challenges all pupils, including the most able. However, you have rightly identified the need to improve the standards that pupils reach in mathematics by building on their problem-solving and reasoning skills.

Teachers have many opportunities to share strong practice across the school, for example through staff development sessions every other Wednesday afternoon. Leaders have worked with teachers to encourage them to challenge pupils consistently in all subjects. This can be seen in the improved outcomes across a range of subjects over time. For example, in 2016 and 2017 progress was above average in modern foreign languages and science.

You acknowledge that the attendance of pupils, particularly those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged, could be further improved.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All necessary checks are made when appointing adults to work with children. Staff and governors receive regular training on how to keep children safe, for example from abuse, radicalisation and extremism. Staff know what to do should a concern about a pupil arise. Leaders

work with a range of external agencies to provide vulnerable pupils with highly effective support. Referrals are made effectively and in a timely manner.

All of the pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they feel safe. They also said that bullying is rare. Pupils are confident that staff will deal effectively with any problems. Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe, for example when they are online. Staff, parents and carers agree that pupils are safe at school.

Inspection findings

- My main line of enquiry for this inspection related to the pupils' progress in mathematics. This had been an area for improvement since the previous inspection. In 2016, pupils made broadly average progress in mathematics. However, in 2017, pupils' progress dipped to below the national average. You have introduced a range of initiatives to improve this. You have secured the services of a consultant who has improved teachers' subject knowledge of the new mastery mathematics curriculum. Leaders have focused on improving the accuracy of teachers' assessments. A review of the school's latest assessment information, observation in lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work shows that progress in mathematics is improving. However, you understand that pupils can make more rapid progress if there is a stronger focus on reasoning and problem-solving skills.
- In 2016, the progress pupils made in English was below the national average. Pupils are now benefiting from stronger teaching and are making better progress. Leaders have revised schemes of work to match the GCSE curriculum. This is helping to ensure that pupils are better prepared for their examinations. Teachers use questioning skilfully to probe understanding and encourage pupils to think more deeply. Pupils' books showed evidence of challenging work set by teachers. Pupils' progress in English improved in 2017 and was broadly average. Current assessment information and lesson observations show that pupils are making good progress in English.
- In the past, the small number of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have not made the progress that they should. The newly appointed special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has improved support for these pupils. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities benefit from effective interventions and the provision of specialist support. Progress is carefully tracked by leaders. Teaching assistants work well alongside the teachers to provide encouragement and support for pupils. Inspection evidence indicates that the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is improving.
- You identified in 2016 that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities were excluded more than their peers. Leaders and the SENCo have introduced a range of strategies, such as mentoring, to include these pupils more in school. Consequently, there has been a drop in the exclusion rate for this group of pupils. They behave well in lessons and around the school.
- My final line of enquiry related to leaders' actions to improve pupils' attendance. In 2017, overall attendance was below the national average and persistent absence was higher than the national average. Leaders, together with the

attendance officer and education support officer, work closely with families and monitor pupils' attendance closely. Leaders have taken decisive action, including issuing fixed penalties where pupils' attendance is low. Regular attendance is celebrated through rewards. As a result, the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school has decreased. However, you recognise that some pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, continue to attend school less regularly than others in the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers build on pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills so that progress in mathematics improves further
- pupils' overall attendance continues to improve, especially that of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities.

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

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, inspectors met with you, other senior leaders and a group of middle leaders. I met with three members of the governing body and with a representative of the local authority. Accompanied by senior leaders, we visited a number of lessons to observe learning and scrutinise pupils' books. We met with a group of pupils and spoke to others in lessons and around the school.

We took account of 44 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including 42 free-text responses. We also considered the views of 45 staff and 30 pupils through Ofsted's online questionnaires. A range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' attainment and progress. We evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies on keeping children safe, records of training, safeguarding checks and attendance and behaviour information. Inspectors also undertook a review of the school's website.