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14 May 2018

Mr Eddie Green  
Headteacher  
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Leicestershire  
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Dear Mr Green

### **Short inspection of Ashby School**

Following my visit to the school on 24 April 2018 with Ofsted Inspectors Richard Vasey and Christine Staley, 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 February 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You and the leadership team, along with governors, are aspirational for the school and are determined to realise future improvements and success. Your evaluation of the school is comprehensive, honest and clear. You know the school well, including its strengths, and you have accurately prioritised the areas in need of further improvement. Your plans to address the areas that need to improve are clear and appropriate. However, some aspects do not include specific, measurable success criteria. Governors are kept well informed about school developments and provide appropriate challenge where needed. The vast majority of staff, pupils, parents and carers have a positive view and support the work of the school.

Following your previous inspection, pupils' overall progress in 2017 was below the national average, particularly for disadvantaged and the most able pupils. You have rightly identified the achievement of these groups as a priority for improvement. Pupils make differing rates of progress across different subjects. For example, in 2017 progress for all pupils improved in mathematics but declined in English. Also, as another example, there has been some improvement in the progress of disadvantaged pupils in humanities and English. Therefore, some groups of pupils made less progress than they were capable of. You and the leadership team are taking positive action to address the issues that affect the progress of these groups

of pupils. Your school data suggests that achievement at key stage 4 should be stronger in 2018.

Senior leaders continue to develop and improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. For example, quality assurance processes are becoming much more robust across the curriculum to achieve greater consistency in practice. These actions helped to improve progress in some subject areas in 2017 and you anticipate further improvement in 2018.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that the policies and procedures for keeping pupils safe are effective. Access to the school buildings is tightly controlled and all visitors are properly checked on entry. The recruitment and induction of new staff are robust. Appropriate checks are made on all staff and volunteers to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. Leaders with responsibility for safety ensure that all record-keeping is of a good quality. Effective processes are in place to follow up issues as they arise in a timely and appropriate way. The school works well with a range of external agencies to support pupils to make sure that they are kept safe.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school and that they are well cared for. They know who they can talk to if they have any worries or concerns. Pupils are informed about how they can keep themselves safe, including how to stay safe online. School records show that incidents of bullying are rare. Pupils told inspectors that the school is a friendly place and any bullying would be dealt with by staff effectively. Staff, and an overwhelming majority of parents, are confident that pupils feel safe at school.

All staff and governors fully understand their safeguarding responsibilities. You have ensured that regular training is provided to keep them updated on procedures and potential safeguarding risks. As a result, safeguarding is a strength at this school and you have established a culture of vigilance.

### **Inspection findings**

- The previous inspection report called for leaders to work with parents to improve the attendance of pupils whose achievement was affected by their absence. Overall, rates of pupil attendance have improved to be in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school has also decreased and is now below the national average. However, despite your efforts, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities who are regularly absent from school remains too high. Leaders' strategies to improve attendance for these groups require further evaluation and development.
- The general behaviour of pupils around the school site and in lessons is good. There is a strong and supportive school ethos based on community values. Relationships between staff and pupils are good and pupils value the pastoral care provided by the school. Parents who responded to Ofsted's survey, Parent

View, agreed with this. However, the rates of internal and external exclusion remain high. Repeat exclusions from a minority of pupils also remain high. The number of disadvantaged pupils represented in the school's exclusion records is disproportionately high.

- Alternative provision for pupils at risk of disengagement from learning is effective and well managed. Together with the Northwest Leicestershire Learning and Inclusion Partnership, this highly personalised and appropriate provision has helped to change pupils' attitudes. Consequently, pupils who attend this provision are now making better progress than they did previously.
- The subject knowledge of teachers is good. Learning is generally well planned, and teachers use questioning effectively to probe pupils' understanding. However, inspectors also observed inconsistencies in the quality of teaching at key stage 4. In some lessons the pace of learning was slow and pupils, particularly the most able, were not challenged enough to make better progress. Inspectors also found that the presentation of boys' work was generally less good than that of girls.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have taken some action to improve the quality of feedback pupils receive. In the sixth form, students receive very high-quality verbal and written feedback. They talked confidently about how their learning experiences have helped them to improve their understanding to make better progress. By contrast, inspectors found the quality of feedback across a range of subjects at key stage 4 to be less consistent. Pupils are less clear about where they have been successful in their learning and how they can make further improvements. Pupils who spoke to inspectors agreed that feedback was variable.
- Disadvantaged pupils have not achieved as well as other pupils nationally in their GCSE examinations. Despite some improvement in some subject areas, the achievement of these pupils has been significantly below the national average since 2016. Systems have been set up to track the performance of disadvantaged pupils and monitor the quality of provision more closely. The impact of some initiatives, such as the mathematics intervention programme and the high achievers project, has been successful. The progress of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school is showing signs of improvement. However, school leaders and governors recognise that more effective strategies are required to ensure that their progress improves to become closer to the national average.
- The sixth form is a strength of the school. Standards in both academic and vocational courses have improved over the last three years and outcomes, overall, are just above the national average. Students who spoke to inspectors are proud to be part of the sixth form and speak very positively about their experience. Attendance in the sixth form is high and immediate action is taken if any lesson is missed. Students are attracted by the broad curriculum offer and they value the pastoral care and support which help them to achieve well. The quality of teaching seen by inspectors was consistently good. Carefully planned questioning by teachers challenges students to think independently so that they can deepen and apply their understanding. Consequently, students make good progress and are well prepared for their next steps in education, employment or

training. You need to build further upon the success of the sixth form by focusing on improving progress outcomes for those students with lower prior attainment on entry.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- further action is taken so that the attendance of pupils who are disadvantaged or have SEN and/or disabilities improves
- the strategies used to support disadvantaged pupils are more precise in addressing the needs of individuals so that they attend school more regularly, behave well and make better progress
- they work to improve teaching at key stage 4 so that pupils make consistently good progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Stevens  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, inspectors spoke with you and other senior leaders and governors. Inspectors visited a range of subject areas with senior leaders to observe teaching and look at pupils' work. Inspectors also talked with pupils from Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form formally and with others informally during breaktime. Inspectors scrutinised the school's safeguarding arrangements and record-keeping, which included the school's record of recruitment checks on staff and case studies about referrals made to external agencies. A discussion took place with the school's designated safeguarding lead. Inspectors scrutinised records about attendance and behaviour and examined a range of additional documentary evidence. This included the school's self-evaluation, development planning and data on pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspectors considered the views of 136 parents through their response to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and Ofsted's free-text service. They considered the 67 responses to Ofsted's survey for staff and the 120 responses to Ofsted's survey for pupils.