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Mrs Joanna Bell
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Dear Mrs Bell

Short inspection of Lawnswood School

Following my visit to the school on 1 May 2018 with Fiona Dixon, 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

The time since the previous inspection has been a challenging period in the school's history. However, since your appointment in 2014, your strong and determined leadership has ensured that the school has built on the successes outlined in the previous inspection report. Your school self-evaluation is very accurate. You are justifiably proud of the achievements of your pupils. You will not allow any complacency and are very aware of the aspects of the school's work which need further improvement. The restructured leadership team supports you effectively and clearly shares your determination and vision for the school. There have been some difficult decisions to make and you have tackled those issues with both courage and sensitivity. You always have at the forefront of your mind what is in the best interests of the pupils in the school.

There have been changes in personnel on the governing body since the previous inspection. There is now a fine blend of experienced and more recently appointed governors. Between them they bring a wide range of relevant experience. They have a clear understanding of their roles and there are systems in place which allow them both to support and challenge leaders. It was clear from conversations with them, and from governors' meeting minutes, that they have the skills, training and confidence to fulfil this role. Governance is now a strength of the school.

Middle leaders, too, are an emerging strength. Once again there is a pleasing mix of new staff and teachers who have worked in the school for some time. Regular contact with their link in the senior leadership team has given them the confidence to become key players in checking the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. This more rigorous quality assurance has been central to the improved examination results in 2017 and the strong progress made by current pupils.

You expect high standards as regards behaviour. Both staff and pupils welcome the increased clarity, brought about by your changes to the behaviour policy. However, you realise that you have not won over the hearts and minds of a minority of pupils. This is clear from the number of pupils who have been excluded. You agree that the number is too high and are working to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions.

The school is an inclusive, diverse community. You welcome pupils from a wide range of backgrounds and pride yourself on the pastoral support you give to each and every one of them. Pupils appreciate the visible staff presence about school at changeover times. The atmosphere in classrooms and about school is usually calm and harmonious. Pupils generally show respect for each other and adults. They wear their uniform with pride.

During the inspection, we agreed that there are aspects of the school's work which need further improvement. You accept that too many pupils are excluded from school. Furthermore, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are more likely to be excluded than other pupils. You have responded effectively to the increased number of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, but realise there is still work to do in this area. You are also aware that there is still some variation in the quality of teaching.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a clear ethos about the school that sets the safety of pupils as a high priority. Leaders, including governors, have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality.

Leadership of this area is strong. Staff are vigilant and leaders work closely with external agencies in the community to ensure that appropriate action is being taken to keep the most vulnerable pupils safe. All staff receive regular and high-quality training and support. Governors are also well trained and review the school's systems regularly to check that they are fit for purpose.

Pupils, too, receive extensive training on potential dangers and, consequently, they can speak confidently about measures they can take to keep themselves safe. They say they feel safe and that they have confidence in school staff to help them resolve any issues which arise.

The school's approach is best summed up by saying that no stone is left unturned to ensure that children are safe. One example of this is the way a suitably qualified member of staff is available during school holidays, to ensure that the most

vulnerable pupils remain safe.

Inspection findings

- The disappointing GCSE results in 2016 proved to be a turning point for the school. You analysed them thoroughly and, as a result, made important changes. The much improved 2017 results give proof of the impact of your work. Pupils, overall, made progress just above what was expected nationally. Progress for disadvantaged pupils was also just above the national figure.
- You are very clear about which strategies led to this improvement. The improved teaching and learning and key changes of leadership played their part. You also overhauled the systems which generate progress information and more accurate information allowed you to focus support for underachieving pupils more effectively.
- The formal sixth-form link with a neighbouring school has proved to be successful. In 2017, A-Level students made significantly better progress than the national figure. Indeed, their performance was ranked in the top 20% of schools nationally. Pupils on vocational courses also made good progress, better than the national figure. Current sixth-form students are also making strong progress across a wide range of subjects.
- You show no complacency and are determined to build on the much improved GCSE results. You are determined that teachers provide suitably challenging work right from Year 7. Inspectors saw an example of this in the scrutiny of pupils' books in English. In their first year in the school, pupils across the ability range demonstrate a good grasp of GCSE texts. Furthermore, from the outset, teachers use the GCSE style of assessment.
- Current pupils, across key stages 3 and 4, are now making strong progress across many subjects. There is some variability across some subjects, but you are supporting those areas where progress is less rapid.
- Attendance overall was just above the national figure in 2017, but has dropped slightly this year. The percentage of pupils who are persistently absent is above the national figure. However, you are aware that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is not as good as that of other pupils. You now have systems in place to monitor attendance closely and support those who do not attend regularly. Furthermore, you have increased staffing and stepped up the support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. These measures are starting to have impact, but need more time.
- As a result of strong guidance and improved attainment, every pupil who left the school at the end of Year 11 in 2017 moved on to appropriate further education, employment or training.
- Staff morale is high. The responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire showed the vast majority of teachers to be supportive of you and the changes you have made. Parent View, the Ofsted questionnaire, showed parents to be positive too.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- strategies continue to develop and become embedded to reduce the number of exclusions
- they continue to focus on the provision for the increasing number of pupils who have special educational needs, so that they are supported well, attend regularly and are less likely to be excluded
- they continue to focus on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, so that that all teaching comes up to the standard of the very best teaching now evident in school.

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

Yours sincerely

David Pridding
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, your senior leaders and some of your middle leaders, governors and groups of pupils. I met with a representative of the local authority and the director of school improvement for the Red Kite Teaching Alliance. Inspectors had conversations with pupils informally at social times. We gathered a range of evidence from conducting observations of learning and from scrutinising pupils' work jointly with your middle and senior leaders. The inspection team checked and evaluated documents, including your child protection policy, safeguarding records, school self-evaluation, school improvement plans, attendance and behaviour information and minutes from governors' meetings. Inspectors also checked the compliance of your school's website and reviewed the 84 parent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 64 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. There were 10 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.