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Mrs A Gormally
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Gormally

Short inspection of Golborne High School

Following my visit to the school on Tuesday 2 February 2016 with Liz Kelly, 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

While new to the role of headteacher from January 2016, your knowledge of the school runs deep from your time as deputy. Consequently, leaders' and governors' views of the school's strengths and areas for improvement are accurate. Rightly you have sought to improve the quality of teaching further, focusing on those few staff whose teaching is not as routinely good as that found elsewhere in the school. Your efforts have been successful: outcomes for pupils are continuing to improve.

The areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been tackled with a good measure of success. Your accurate and insightful evaluation has revealed that a little inconsistency remains in some areas of the school's work. However, the plans you have in place to bring about improvement are appropriate and challenging.

Pupils attain broadly average standards by the time they leave Golborne High. Importantly, the progress pupils make from Year 7 to Year 11 has improved year-on-year since the previous inspection. Successive cohorts of pupils have made increasingly better progress in mathematics so that these rates were broadly in line with other pupils nationally in 2015. Leaders' focus on ensuring the assessments of pupils are accurate has been absolutely right. Consequently, the information leaders and teachers hold about what pupils can do is accurate. These assessments show

that, where gaps have existed, between disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and their peers for example, they are closing.

Pupils with whom inspectors spoke said they were proud of their school. They exemplify British values well, not least in their commitment to tolerance. Their enjoyment of school is evident in their rising levels of attendance. The curriculum supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The additional curriculum time in Year 11, when pupils remain on site for an extended time at the end of the day, is preparing these pupils well for their forthcoming examinations. All in all, pupils are being prepared well for their next stages of education, employment and training.

Undoubtedly this is a time of transition for the school, with new leadership in the most senior positions. Nonetheless, confidence in the school is high with around 90% of parents responding to Parent View at the time of the inspection stating they would recommend the school to another parent. Furthermore, all staff spoken to and/or responding to the inspection questionnaire were most positive about the school and its leaders.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders take the safeguarding of their pupils seriously. Staff have undergone recent training, including in the duty to protect pupils from developing extremist views. The arrangements leaders have in place promote pupils' safety, well-being and personal development well.

Pupils with whom inspectors spoke during this inspection reported that they felt safe. They were confident they would always be able to report concerns to an adult and such concerns would be acted on. Where concerns arise, leaders generally record incidents well. In the main, records include helpful summaries outlining what type of incident took place and who was involved. However, on occasions, these records do not give sufficient detail of events; words used for example, to help leaders learn and improve behaviour further. The large majority of parents responding to Parent View by the time of this inspection reported that their child felt safe.

Leaders have in place clear, thorough and effective arrangements to support vulnerable pupils, including strong links with external agencies. Leaders are particularly successful in supporting pupils at risk of exclusion, with the result that exclusion rates are continuing to fall. Good attendance is promoted well. While boys, disadvantaged pupils, and those with special needs attend less well, their attendance is rising and gaps between them and their peers are closing.

Inspection findings

- You are assisted well in the leadership of the school by your senior team and your well-informed governing body. Governors are passionate about their work and provide increasing levels of challenge and support. Furthermore, the

executive curriculum leaders are increasingly adept at holding their colleagues to account for the progress made by all pupils across all year groups.

- The determination of leaders to improve further the quality of teaching is clear. As well as supporting targeted teachers to improve, leaders carry out regular checks to ensure that the quality of teaching across the school is at least good and that pupils are interested in their learning. At the heart of your checking lies the progress pupils make in lessons and over time. Your rigorous approach explains why rates of progress from starting points have risen year-on-year since the previous inspection.
- Your thorough monitoring has identified that a little inconsistency remains in some areas of the school's work. While less evident than at the time of the previous inspection, you recognise that low-level activity takes place in some lessons which does not challenge pupils to make best progress. You are also aware that the work of some pupils is untidy and lacks accuracy in spelling and that some teachers are not applying the school's agreed policy for marking and feedback which would enable pupils to make the best possible progress from the feedback that is given. The plans you have in place to improve the school further make clear what success you expect. Consequently, you, your leaders and the governing body are in a strong position to evaluate the impact of actions taken effectively.
- The commitment of all leaders to securing the best possible outcomes for all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, is palpable. Pupils' needs are identified quickly on entry to school or through liaison with primary schools. This means appropriate support is put into place to quickly help individuals with their learning. The success of these actions is evident in the reduction in numbers of those pupils who require additional support to develop their literacy skills.
- The proportion of pupils gaining five GCSE qualifications at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has, over time, been broadly average. Importantly, the progress pupils have made from their starting points has improved year on year.
- The trend of improvement seen since the last inspection is also evident in the progress being made by current pupils across the school. Leaders' drive to improve the quality and accuracy of assessments in order to provide clear baselines from which pupils should make at least expected progress in their learning has paid dividends. From our visits to lessons and our scrutiny of pupils' work it was clear to inspectors that the information your leaders and teachers hold about what pupils can do is accurate. These robust assessments show all gaps are continuing to close and rates of progress in mathematics continue to improve.
- The improvement in mathematics is the direct result of providing targeted support to pupils needing additional help or challenge earlier in a pupil's career, in Year 7 for example. Pupils' misconceptions are now being addressed in a timely fashion. In addition, the extension of this support to higher-ability pupils has resulted in more pupils making better than expected rates of progress than in the past.

- Leaders continue to focus on groups who, historically, have performed less well than their peers. The additional taught lesson ('lesson 6') for Year 11 pupils, focusing on English, mathematics and science one week and humanities, languages, creative and technical subjects the next, enables staff to target the learning needs of all pupils but especially boys, pupils for whom the pupil premium is intended, and those with special educational needs. Assessments point to improved outcomes at GCSE in 2016 for all groups of pupils because of this focused teaching.
- Pupils were polite, friendly and open in their discussions with inspectors. They wear their 'Achiever' badges with pride, their self-esteem enhanced. While sometimes a little boisterous in the corridors, they settle quickly into lessons and are well behaved around school. Pupils are tolerant in their outlook, stating that it is safe to come out as being gay or to be transgender in this school. They reported how well key messages in assembly or tutor time help them support fellow pupils to be open about their sexuality.
- Recognising that in the past too high a proportion of pupils left the school not in employment, education or training (NEET), leaders have invested in time and personnel to improve the quality of independent careers advice and guidance. The result is that the proportion of pupils who are NEET has fallen and the school has attained a Gold Award for its work in offering high-quality guidance.
- The school's website is being re-constructed. Leaders are aware that information relating to the Key Stage 3 curriculum, the impact of pupil premium funding, and links from the school's policy for special needs to the local offer need to be made clearer.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should:

- Raise the attainment of pupils so that they reach above average standards by the end of Year 11 by:
 - ensuring that all pupils, regardless of ability or groups, are challenged to use the knowledge, skills and understanding gained previously to make greater strides in their learning
 - demanding that pupils present their work neatly and with attention to accuracy
 - ironing out remaining inconsistencies in the way teachers apply the school's agreed policy for marking and feedback so that pupils make the best possible progress from such feedback that is given.

- Tighten further the school's records for summarising incidents of less than good behaviour by making clear the nature of words used in incidents so that leaders can make best use of this information to improve behaviour further.

Yours sincerely

Mark Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, meetings were held with you and other leaders in the school, members of the governing body and groups of pupils.

Inspectors made visits to several lessons to observe learning, including six that were made jointly with a member of the senior leadership team. Inspectors spoke to pupils about their work and scrutinised pupils' written work. One inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.

Inspectors considered a range of documentary evidence, including the school's self-evaluation, documents about keeping pupils safe, assessment records and minutes of meetings of the governing body.

Inspectors took account of 68 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View, including the 51 that included written comments. They also took account of 15 responses to the staff questionnaire. Owing to technical difficulties, it was not possible to view any responses to the pupil questionnaire. Inspectors therefore took account of surveys undertaken by the school and spoke to pupils during break and lunchtimes in addition to two formal meetings to gather their views.