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Ms Karen Lockett
Alleyne's Academy
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Dear Ms Lockett

Short inspection of Alleyne's Academy

Following my visit to the school on 19 April 2016 with Christine Bray, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in December 2011.

This school continues to be good.

An ethos of care and support pervades the school, alongside a shared determination that all pupils should succeed academically and develop into rounded young people who are ready to take their place in society when they leave. You, ably supported by governors and senior leaders, have established this ethos and it is recognised and valued by staff, parents and pupils alike. One parent wrote, 'The members of staff are very keen and enthusiastic about their teaching, which translates into a positive attitude in the pupils. Our child has developed a very good rapport with staff members as they are extremely approachable and encouraging. We would have no hesitation in recommending this school to future parents.'

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Areas for improvement that were identified in that report and in the more recent monitoring inspection have been tackled energetically and improvement is evident in these areas. The previous inspection report directed leaders to raise standards in mathematics and in the sixth form as well as further improving teaching. The monitoring inspection identified the progress of disadvantaged pupils in key stage 4 as an area for improvement.

Since the previous inspection, teaching has improved and pupils make good progress in key stages 3 and 4 in most subjects as a result. Girls make particularly strong progress and leaders know that boys lag a little behind them. Better teaching in mathematics has seen standards rise considerably in this subject. The progress and attendance of disadvantaged pupils have improved over the past 12 months.

For example, in English and in the sixth form, disadvantaged pupils achieve results that are close to, or even better than, others. This closing of achievement gaps is slower in some other GCSE subjects, including mathematics, and this remains a focus area for the school.

The sixth form has many strengths, including the wide range of opportunities and support that teachers provide for students. Sixth formers mentor pupils in the main school, they support in lessons and volunteer in a range of other settings, including local hospices. When asked why students are so keen to give up their time to help younger pupils and others, one sixth former told inspectors that 'Alleyne's sixth formers like giving back'. Outcomes in the sixth form that were improving dipped in 2015. Leaders' careful analysis of why this had happened led to a speedy response, and the school's internal assessment information indicates that the trajectory of improvement will be restored in 2016.

Teachers have strong subject expertise, they question pupils skilfully and relationships in classrooms are excellent. Teachers give thoughtful feedback to pupils that helps them improve their work. Pupils demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning in lessons, they are keen to succeed, they behave well and they trust their teachers and appreciate the extra help that they are given.

The school's focus on the personal development of all pupils is a particular strength. In their time at Alleyne's, pupils grow into thoughtful and considerate young people who understand and respect differences in other people. One pupil told inspectors that 'At Alleyne's you can be who you are. You don't have to change to fit in.'

Safeguarding is effective.

You have forged a culture where everyone understands and carries out their responsibilities to ensure that pupils are kept safe. All staff have been trained in aspects of child protection and safeguarding, including the dangers posed by the internet and the duty to prevent pupils from being exposed to extreme or radical messages. Because of this comprehensive training, staff are knowledgeable, alert to potential dangers and confident to pass on any concerns they might have.

Safeguarding policies are up to date and regularly reviewed by the governing body which is also well trained and able to check on the school's safeguarding through its designated safeguarding governor. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe from potential dangers through assemblies and a high-quality personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in the school, that bullying is very rare and they have great faith in their teachers to deal with any bullying, or other problems, which might occur.

Inspection findings

- You provide a crystal-clear vision for high-quality education at Alleyne's that incorporates academic success alongside personal development. Staff, parents and pupils share this vision and it is evident in all aspects of the school's work.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate. They know and celebrate the school's many strengths but are also acutely aware that there are areas that need to improve further, including achievement in the sixth form and for disadvantaged pupils at GCSE. Leaders are not complacent. They are keen to act on feedback and see the school continue to improve.
- Recently appointed senior leaders form a hard-working and enthusiastic team. The impact of their work is evident in a number of areas including improving attendance and closing achievement gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others.
- Governors know the school well and are very committed to seeing it provide the best possible education for its pupils. They use their expertise well to support the school, but they are equally prepared to challenge leaders to improve when they feel it is necessary.
- Teachers are fully committed to the Alleyne's vision of academic success and personal development, and many go 'above and beyond' in the support they provide for pupils. Several pupils told inspectors that their teachers are approachable, helpful, caring and supportive.
- Typical teaching at Alleyne's is characterised by teachers' strong subject knowledge, careful planning and helpful feedback to pupils. Expectations are generally high, although occasionally teachers do not insist that boys produce enough work, or work of sufficient quality, in lessons.
- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection because of leaders' skilful recruitment, careful monitoring and targeted training. It is particularly effective in English, but has also improved in mathematics which was previously an area of comparative weakness.
- Pupils' behaviour is consistently good in lessons and around the school at social times. They are thoughtful, courteous and polite to their peers and to adults.
- Attendance, historically close to the national average for secondary schools, has improved this year and is now above national levels. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is also improving because of the actions that leaders have taken, including employing the school's own education welfare officer.
- The school's work to promote the personal development of pupils remains a particular strength. A carefully planned PSHE programme, supplemented by regular assemblies, ensures that pupils in the main school learn about British values, including democracy and respect for others. This programme is also strong in the sixth form where students give up their own time to help and support pupils in Years 9 to 11. They also undertake a variety of other activities, including work experience, sport and 'Young enterprise', and these help to develop broad employability skills such as team working and communication.

- Pupils receive high-quality careers education throughout their time in the school, including at least one interview with a senior member of staff each year. Almost all pupils who leave Year 11 move to further education or training. Sixth-form students are very well supported to apply to university or for an apprenticeship and, as a result, almost all students who leave Alleyne's sixth form also move on to higher education or training.
- Pupils join the school with attainment that is broadly average and finish Year 11 having achieved GCSE results that are well above national averages. For example, in 2015, 70% of pupils achieved five GCSEs graded A* to C, including English and mathematics, compared with a national figure of 56%.
- Girls make particularly strong progress from their starting points. In 2015, 80% of girls achieved the five GCSEs graded A* to C, including English and mathematics, benchmark. Boys' progress has improved over recent years, but at a slower rate than that of girls and, as a result, girls make much more progress and achieve better outcomes than boys.
- Since the last inspection, pupils' GCSE attainment has improved in a number of subjects including mathematics, science, humanities and languages. Attainment in English has remained consistently strong throughout that time.
- The gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others, in the school and compared nationally, were identified as a concern in the monitoring inspection of April 2015. Since that time, decisive action by leaders has led to considerable improvement across several subjects, most notably English, where the achievement gaps have all but vanished. However, gaps remain in some subjects, including mathematics.
- Sixth-form students who left Year 13 in 2015 made less progress than expected in several academic and vocational subjects including English, history and product design. Leaders' analysis of the reasons for this dip has resulted in them putting into place several strategies aimed at rectifying the decline. The school's internal assessment information indicates that achievement in the sixth form will improve in both academic and vocational subjects in 2016, so that students will make at least the progress expected of them.
- Students who join the sixth form without having achieved a GCSE grade A* to C in English or mathematics are given one-to-one support to retake these examinations. This strategy has proved very successful with almost all students improving their results and the majority achieving their desired A* to C grade.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching in the sixth form guarantees that students make consistently good progress in all their subjects
- the strong progress made by many pupils in key stage 4 is achieved by all, including boys and disadvantaged pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Alun Williams

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection we met with you and other senior and middle leaders, the chair of the governing body and two other governors. We met with a group of pupils drawn from Years 9 to 11 and a separate group of sixth formers in order to find out their views about their education in the school. We joined you and your deputy headteacher in short visits to lessons where we spoke to pupils and looked at their work. The views of parents were considered through the 51 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also evaluated several documents including improvement plans, information about pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance, and how the school keeps pupils safe.