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Mr David Naisbitt  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Naisbitt

### **Short inspection of Oakwood High School**

Following my visit to the school on 27 September 2016 with Robert Pritchard, 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 December 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have very comprehensive and systematic procedures for evaluating the quality of education provided. As a result, you and all staff and governors are fully aware of the school's strengths and relative weaknesses. This means that you have been able to maintain the positive aspects of the school, such as English, while improving those aspects that were relatively weaker.

You have created an open and honest, no blame culture which means all staff work together to make sure that relative weaknesses are tackled. Pupils are put at the heart of everything the school does. This was shown most recently by the school community's strong support for changes to the school day, which have subsequently led to improvements in the effectiveness of teaching.

#### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding is of paramount importance to all staff. Regular effective training on the safeguarding issues pupils might face means that staff are well prepared to deal with these issues. There are good links with outside agencies. Referrals to the local authority are made promptly and followed through rigorously. There are extremely strong links with parents, which means that decisions about pupils are made with them and their parents rather than for them.

You have taken a unique approach to ensuring that pupils are safe when they are excluded. Pupils attend either a local primary school or the college when they are excluded and work with a member of staff from the school. This means that they are able to keep up with their school work while they are excluded and also stay safe.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

### **Inspection findings**

- In 2015, examination results in mathematics fell. Too many pupils who were capable of achieving an A\* to C grade in mathematics did not do so. In particular, the most able disadvantaged pupils made less progress than would be expected from their starting points. The whole community was highly disappointed at these results. You reviewed them, found out what had gone wrong and put in place well-thought-through action plans which involved the whole school, including governors. As a result, the mathematics results in 2016 were considerably better. In particular, the differences between disadvantaged pupils and their peers nationally reduced significantly. The most able disadvantaged pupils in particular made much better progress. However, as you know, there is still work to be done to make sure that pupils' progress, and in particular the most able pupils' progress, in mathematics is as good as it is in English.
- At the last inspection you were asked to improve teaching to allow pupils to achieve equally well across all subjects. You have reviewed what makes teaching successful for your pupils. A notable change has been the use of 'best books' in mathematics. The use of these books over the last academic year has been refined. Pupils say that these books give them valuable revision notes and they appreciate their use. In addition, bespoke and valued professional development for staff is in place. As a result, pupils are making better progress in subjects which were relatively weak.
- You have taken an innovative approach to the issues of teacher recruitment. You have created a programme which 'grows' the confidence and skills of staff. It provides opportunities for staff to obtain both the experience and qualifications needed to take their next steps. One example of this is providing graduates who are thinking of becoming teachers with the opportunity to work as a learning support assistant for a year before they start their graduate teacher training programme at the school. This is highly effective as it gives graduates an insight into a school and enables them to be better prepared for their programme.
- In 2015 the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was much lower than that of other pupils in the school and nationally. You have put in place many strategies to improve attendance, including regularly informing parents about their child's attendance and real time monitoring through an electronic system. As a result, the attendance of these two groups of pupils is now much higher. However, there has not been a systematic review of exactly which of the

strategies employed has had the most impact. This means that all strategies are being used irrespective of their effectiveness.

- You have, with all staff, developed the '5Rs' of Oakwood. These are respect, reflect, responsibility, resilience and resourcefulness. The 5Rs provide all in the school community with a common language when discussing pupils and their attitudes to learning and teaching. This means that it is easy for pupils to understand what they have done well and what they need to improve.
- The three-week transition period at the end of the summer term is much appreciated by pupils, teachers, governors and parents. This period allows Year 6 pupils to settle in before they start Year 7. This means they are not worried over the summer about the move to 'big school' and, as a result, the start of the school year in September is much more efficient and effective.
- Pupils are encouraged to read frequently in lessons. They are confident about sounding out and reading new words and if they are not sure their peers help them to work out the word.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils, and in particular the most able pupils, make the same progress in mathematics as they do in English
- strategies to improve attendance are reviewed systematically and the most effective one used.

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

Yours sincerely

Tanya Stuart  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, inspectors met with senior leaders, middle leaders and members of staff. Inspectors met with a group of pupils and listened to a number of pupils read. Lessons were visited with members of the senior leadership team to see the impact of strategies introduced. An inspector met with a group of governors. Documentation was scrutinised including: minutes from governors' meetings, information about pupils' progress, details of attendance and information about safeguarding.

**The key lines of enquiry for this inspection were as follows:**

- In 2015 in mathematics pupils made less progress than in English. What are the leadership and management doing about this? What has been the impact of their actions?
- Between 2014 and 2015 disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities did not attend school as often as their peers. How has the school managed this situation?
- The school had a higher than national exclusion rate in 2014–15. Given this, how is the school managing to ensure that pupils who are excluded are still safe?