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Mr Steve Wilson
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Dear Mr Wilson

Short inspection of Pendle Vale College

Following my visit to the school on 7 December 2016 with Deborah Bailey, 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school is improving because there is a culture of high aspirations and accountability across the school. As a result, pupils' outcomes are improving apace. You have successfully addressed most areas for improvement since the last inspection because of the good leadership that you and other members of the senior team provide. Leaders across the school are ambitious and are keen to pursue excellence. You have ensured that strong values and inclusion permeate the school. Pupils' background, culture, ethnicity or social group are not seen as barriers or obstacles to success. Staff believe that leaders are driving the school in the right direction and, as a result, are confident to take proposed leaps of faith when you set out on new initiatives.

Leaders heavily invest in developing pupils' character, life skills, confidence and resilience. They recognise the challenges facing pupils in the modern world and have a desire to ensure that they are fully equipped to become successful citizens. Staff work collaboratively to ensure that pupils have access to a multitude of non-qualification activities. These cultural opportunities and personal challenges sharpen pupils' skills, confidence and self-esteem. Their growing maturity contributes to more pupils being successful in their academic achievements. Leaders encourage all pupils in key stage 3 to try something new from a programme of 50 things, known as the 'Pendle Vale 50'.

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is well matched to pupils' capabilities and

wishes. As a result, pupils embark on successful learning pathways from the day they arrive at Pendle Vale College. Leaders have been adventurous in developing a non-qualification programme in key stage 4, known as 'The ASPIRE programme'. In this programme pupils take part in community projects, physical activities, volunteering and work experience. These opportunities build pupils' aspirations, self-reliance, perseverance and interpersonal skills. Developing pupils' character and celebrating success are strong themes that permeate the school.

Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and inspectors saw no disruption to learning during the inspection. Teachers provide purposeful lessons sculpted around the needs of pupils. The majority of pupils show pride in their work and have good attitudes to learning. During break and lunchtime, pupils cooperate and clearly enjoy spending time together. Pupils walk calmly around the well-maintained site and display good manners and respect for others around them. Pupils who spoke with inspectors stated that behaviour in lessons is good and that their learning is rarely disrupted.

A strength of the school is the effective system used to track pupils' progress. Leaders discreetly display current pupils' progress on walls called 'war boards'. This allows leaders to identify visually any pupils who require further support. This approach stimulates in-depth discussion between senior and middle leaders. As a result, barriers to pupils' learning are removed and timely and appropriate interventions are applied, leading to improved achievement for pupils. Senior leaders seek external checks and validation and consequently their predictions of pupils' attainment are accurate. They constantly shine an unforgiving light on any underperformance and demand to know teachers' next steps in driving up standards. As a result of this approach, pupils who left the school in 2016 made strong progress from their starting points.

You have communicated your vision for the future development of the school clearly and there is a discernible thirst and desire for continued improvement. School leaders are not complacent and frankly acknowledge that boys' achievement is still not good enough throughout the school. Leaders have already made initial steps towards tackling the areas for improvement identified during the current inspection. However, there is limited evidence so far on how these new systems are raising standards throughout the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership of safeguarding in the school is strong. Safeguarding arrangements and procedures operate properly and promptly. Records are detailed and relevant. The school's safeguarding policy is clear and informative, reflecting current guidance and requirements. Leaders ensure that keeping pupils safe is a fundamental part of the everyday life in the school. They ensure that staff are well trained and well versed in their responsibility to ensure the welfare and safety of all pupils.

Pupils are well informed about how to keep themselves safe and leaders have ensured that relevant information is delivered through the curriculum. All staff have

a detailed understanding of the needs of every pupil because systems for sharing information across the school are robust.

Inspection findings

- Results from the most recent examinations in the summer of 2016 show that pupils at the end of Year 11 had made faster progress from their starting points than all pupils nationally. The number of pupils making good progress in English and mathematics has risen dramatically compared to the previous year. The most able disadvantaged pupils and all disadvantaged pupils made strong progress in many subject areas.
- Current pupils also make good progress from their various starting points in a range of subjects and across year groups.
- Leaders ensure that the extra funding provided to support disadvantaged pupils makes a difference to their overall progress and personal development. Leaders' actions have been successful in diminishing the difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally. Differences in English and mathematics are closing more rapidly than in some other subjects.
- A higher proportion of the most able pupils than is seen nationally made strong progress in the school. However, inspection evidence revealed that the most able pupils and the most able disadvantaged pupils are not consistently challenged effectively across a wide range of subjects. The school's current data confirms they are not yet making strong enough progress from their starting points.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities generally make good progress from their individual starting points. The new special educational needs coordinator has injected fresh ideas and sharpened the support for pupils. She has systematically reviewed the provision and made sweeping changes in her drive to improve outcomes for pupils. Recent initiatives are having a strong positive impact on pupils' achievements and life chances.
- Teachers are well versed in the need to plan for different pupils to ensure that all pupils make good progress from their starting points. However, some teachers do not provide enough opportunities to stretch and challenge pupils in lessons, particularly the most able. As a result, a few pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Improvements to the overall quality of teaching and learning have been at the heart of the school's work since the last inspection. Teachers benefit from regular scheduled opportunities for professional development. They have many opportunities to share good practice, including through coaching groups, teaching and learning bulletins and optional learning surgeries where staff can top up their skills. Monthly staff meetings provide a platform for leaders to engage teachers with new approaches to improve their practice.
- Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are good. Teachers consistently uphold the behaviour policy and this promotes an environment where pupils can enjoy learning. Leaders have strengthened school's systems for recording pupils' attitudes to learning. Pupils with poor attitudes are swiftly identified by middle and senior leaders. However, leaders have not yet effectively tackled or made the improvement needed in the attitude of some boys throughout the school.

- Governors have a strong commitment and are striving to improve the quality of education available to pupils at the school. Governors are a loyal, cohesive working group who use their many skills to challenge and support the school well. They are very well informed about pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching, and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The governing body's committees are well organised and well attended, and provide a good platform to question the impact of leaders' actions and hold leaders to account. The governing body has ensured that the school's website meets requirements.
- Most of the parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, consider that the school is well led and that their children are very well looked after. There were several positive comments about the work of the school. For example, parents wrote, 'The school goes that extra mile to provide additional support and help to children to ensure they reach their full potential' and, 'I am proud my children attend a school that is really committed to high achievement and attainment. The school is responsive to my children's needs.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide pupils with work that consistently stretches them to do their best, particularly the most able pupils
- they implement an effective whole-school strategy to raise boys' achievement and to foster stronger attitudes to learning among boys.

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

Yours sincerely

Dawn Platt

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- Meetings took place with you, other senior leaders, members of the governing body, the special educational needs coordinator and members of staff.
- Inspectors undertook 'learning walks' and observed teaching and learning in English, mathematics, science, and humanities subjects. Inspectors scrutinised the work in some pupils' books during visits to classrooms.
- Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour in a range of situations, including in lessons, around school and at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of supporting documentation about safeguarding and child protection and the school's self-evaluation. They looked at monitoring information and improvement plans, minutes of meetings of the governing body, records related to attendance, and information relating to pupils' achievement.

- Inspectors took into account 17 responses from parents on Ofsted's free-text service. They also considered 64 responses to the online staff questionnaire and 200 responses to the online pupil questionnaire.
- This inspection particularly focused on a number of key questions:
 - What are leaders doing to improve boy's attainment and achievement across the school? Do boys have an equally strong thirst for learning as girls?
 - Are pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities well supported to overcome their barriers to learning and achieve well?
 - Are all groups of current pupils continuing to achieve well throughout the school?
 - Have leaders established effective systems to support teachers' professional development and tackle areas of underperformance within the school?
 - Do leaders ensure that additional funding for pupils results in strong achievement in key stages 3 and 4?