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Mr Martin Witter
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Dear Mr Witter

Short inspection of Ladybridge High School

Following my visit to the school on 18 January 2017 with Jan Rowney, 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 January 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 school has continued to improve since then as a result of senior leaders' high expectations and clear commitment to pupils. Staff commitment is summed up in the school's motto, 'If it isn't good enough for our own children, then it isn't good enough for Ladybridge children either.' Pupils respond well to this commitment. Almost all of those who talked with inspectors said that the best thing about the school was the teachers. Leaders, other staff and pupils work together to create a calm, purposeful and hard-working atmosphere. The members of staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire expressed pride in the school and confidence in senior leaders.

You and other senior leaders are open and honest in your evaluation of the school. You know its strengths and weaknesses very well. This means that you have been able to take determined action to improve less strong aspects. At the previous inspection, inspectors identified the need to continue to improve the quality of teaching and to make sure that the most able are properly challenged.

In response, leaders have:

- improved teaching by carefully identifying where practice is less effective and then providing programmes of training and other support. Leaders and governors

- have been prepared to take firm action if their high expectations have not been met once these programmes have been provided.
- ensured that teachers are expected to plan learning which is targeted to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. In addition, the school has introduced extra activities to inspire and challenge the most able, for example by helping pupils whose families have not previously had contact with a university to understand the benefits of eventually studying for a degree.

You, other leaders and governors are not complacent and continue your work to develop these aspects. You told us about the new appointment of an additional assistant headteacher with specific responsibility for challenging the performance of weaker teams and the success of the most able and disadvantaged pupils. You know that some subject areas, including business studies, English and history, do not perform as well as others and that there is still more to do to ensure that teaching is consistently of the highest quality. Your analysis of pupils' examination results and information from teachers' regular assessment tells you that some groups of pupils continue to do less well in some subjects. You have considered the reasons for this so you can be precise in following up any such concerns.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that the arrangements to safeguard pupils are suitable. Their records about safeguarding are detailed and complete. Staff training is comprehensive, which means that adults in school are confident about what they should do if they identify any concerns. Those senior leaders and governors involved in appointing staff receive additional training.

The school's child protection policy is based on a model provided by the local authority and it is openly available on the school website for any parent or other person who may need it.

Leaders know who to call on should they need additional advice about safeguarding matters. There is good communication with staff from the local authority about any particular safeguarding issues.

The pupils we spoke to told us that they feel safe in school and that they are taught about the things they need to know to protect themselves. There are well-organised arrangements for pupils to seek help should they feel they need it.

Inspection findings

- Senior leaders are thorough in their analysis of published data about pupils' outcomes and add to this with information from the school's own assessment system. In 2016, pupils did less well in business studies, English and history than other subjects and this reflected weaker performance over time in English. The school's own assessment is that pupils currently in Year 11 and other years are making faster progress in these subjects. A new system to set higher targets for

- pupils is being introduced. This indicates leaders' desire to continually raise expectations.
- Lower-attaining pupils make less progress in English than most-able pupils do, and less than the progress they make in many other subjects. Leaders have considered this situation and link it to the additional challenges faced by pupils who speak English as an additional language. An increasing proportion of pupils join the school having only recently arrived in the country. The school makes a significant investment in teaching English as a second language. Students with little English learn well and value their education.
- Leaders are also aware that disadvantaged pupils make slower progress than others in English. They provide strong support and challenge to English teachers. This is leading to improvement.
- Pupils value the work of their teachers highly. While much teaching practice in the school is highly effective, weaker pockets remain. Leaders are tackling these systematically through training and other development work with individuals. Leaders check carefully that such work leads to improvement and take further action if needed.
- Attendance is high. This reflects pupils' desire to be in school and learning. If a pupil's attendance falls, staff take rapid action to find out why and ensure that absences are reduced. Pupils' attitudes to school are positive. They behave well and are polite and friendly. Pupils from the wide range of different backgrounds represented in the school get on well together. The pupils who talked with inspectors say that there is no bullying and that if any issues between pupils arise, these are quickly resolved. Pupils accept and work toward the school's high expectations of them, captured in the school's second motto, 'Be the best that you can be'.
- Senior leaders know the school very well. They are ambitious for pupils and have high aspirations for the future. Their evaluation of the school is well informed and honest, and allows them to identify priorities for further improvement. They are determined that this will happen. Their success so far is a positive indicator for the future.
- Governors are rigorous in holding leaders to account. They have managed the recent change of headteacher effectively so that the school has continued to offer a good quality of education. They have sought to make other key appointments so that leadership becomes even stronger.
- Most of the parents who shared their views were pleased with the way staff help their children to learn and look after them.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- their current challenge and support to those subjects identified as less effective, including business studies, English and history, continues to improve practice and

increase pupils' progress

- teachers further build on the examples of highly effective practice in the school so that pupils experience even more consistency in the quality of their learning
- teachers create and use frequent opportunities to extend the learning of different groups of pupils including the most able and disadvantaged.

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

Yours sincerely

David Selby
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, the inspectors met with you and other senior leaders to discuss the school's effectiveness. Inspectors also met with governors and a representative of the local authority. I held a telephone conversation with Bolton's designated officer for safeguarding. I met with a group of pupils and both inspectors talked with other pupils around the school and during lessons. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in classes across the school. A scrutiny of a sample of pupils' books was conducted. We examined documents, including the school's records about safeguarding pupils, the self-evaluation document and the raising attainment plan. Inspectors considered 42 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, together with 24 additional written responses from parents. In addition, the views of 46 members of staff provided through their questionnaire were scrutinised.