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Mr Jon Norden
Principal
Abbey Grange Church of England Academy
Butcher Hill
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Dear Mr Norden

Short inspection of Abbey Grange Church of England Academy

Following my visit to the school on 22 February 2017 with Darren Stewart, Her Majesty's 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 February 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 and your senior leaders are a strong and effective team. You work well with the cohesive group of achievement directors to improve the quality of education. This is done through effective and rigorous quality assurance, which is seen as helpful and supportive by staff, combined with bespoke professional development. A good-quality information system means you know the pupils well and, as a result, you are able to see issues and deal with them before they become problems.

Since the last inspection, you have focused on ensuring that pupils are provided with appropriate challenge in and out of lessons to enable them to fulfil their ambitions. The initiative whereby pupils work with PhD students exposes pupils to the world of university early on, and has raised both their academic achievements and their self-esteem. In addition, a range of pupils from Year 7 to Year 11 are provided with mentors, from within the school and from the business community, to support their learning.

All staff are fully aware of your vision for the school to 'educate, nurture and empower'. Neither you, your senior leaders, staff, governors nor members of the trust are complacent about your roles in providing at least a good education for the pupils who attend Abbey Grange. As a result of your honest and open leadership, strengths and weaknesses are identified and staff know what part they play in

tackling weaknesses and securing improvement. Members of the trust and governing body are kept up to date because you give them regular reports about the school's effectiveness. Trust members and governors challenge you and other leaders on a regular basis.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have efficient and effective policies and procedures to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Staff are aware of their responsibilities and what they need to do if they are faced with a safeguarding issue. Governors and members of the trust are trained in safeguarding, and regular meetings are held between the designated safeguarding lead and the governor with responsibility for safeguarding. This means that governors are aware of trends and are able to support staff as needed. Fastidious record-keeping and monitoring of referrals mean that actions are checked and altered as required to ensure that pupils are safe. The chaplain plays a pivotal role in working with parents and pupils to help keep pupils safe.

Inspection findings

- Since September 2016, much effective work has been done to improve the progress made by the most able disadvantaged pupils. Regular fortnightly meetings to track the progress of these pupils mean that swift action is taken before problems occur. The curriculum has been changed for some pupils to enable them to make more progress. There has also been a focus on developing the teachers' skills to ensure that they have higher expectations of these pupils and provide the right amount of challenge in lessons. Regular communication with parents through additional consultation evenings and telephone contact means that they are more informed about the progress their children are making. As a result of all these initiatives, in place from Year 7 to Year 11, the most able disadvantaged pupils are now making much better progress.
- As part of your focus on continuously reviewing what you are doing and why you are doing it, you are reviewing the school's use of the pupil premium this term. Governors are contributing to this review by supporting and challenging you. New strategies are being put in place which are based more on the bespoke needs of each pupil. It is too early to judge the impact of these new strategies.
- In 2016, the progress made by pupils in languages was poor. You took swift and decisive action to review exactly why this was the case. As a result of the in-depth and thorough analysis, a strategic action plan is in place to improve pupils' progress. This plan is reviewed regularly and the impact of actions is monitored. There is a lead practitioner supporting the development of teaching in languages. Bespoke support combined with the training for staff has resulted in pupils across Years 7 to 11 making much better progress. Lessons in languages help pupils to deal with challenging topics.
- Some pupils, especially those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged, did not attend school as regularly as their peers in the last academic year. As a result of a forensic analysis, new strategies were implemented, alongside those which were already working. The

new strategies, including a new style of reintegration meeting, phased returns, close working with families to stress the importance of good attendance and working with the achievement directors, mean that pupils have a smooth return to school when they have been absent. The use of positive report cards means that staff and parents know when things are working well and these, combined with an attitude of finding out what is going well, mean that pupils feel more positive about school. Overall attendance for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those pupils who are disadvantaged has risen significantly. However, you are fully aware of the need to continue to review these new strategies to make sure that funding is spent in the most effective way.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- teachers continue to challenge the most able disadvantaged pupils to enable them to make even better progress and catch up with their peers
- the new strategies for improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and the progress they make are monitored and evaluated to ensure that funding is spent in the most effective way.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Leeds, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Leeds. 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, achievement directors and a range of staff. An inspector met with a group of pupils and listened to a number of pupils read. Pupils were spoken to informally at social times. 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 and members of the trust. An inspector rang the chair of the governing body to obtain his views. Documentation was scrutinised, including minutes from governors' meetings, information about pupils' progress, documents about teaching and learning, details of attendance and exclusions, and information about safeguarding. Inspectors also reviewed the 115 parent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the 63 responses to the staff questionnaire and 151 responses to the pupil questionnaire.