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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mr Philip Wood
Headteacher
Lytham St Annes Technology and Performing Arts College
Worsley Road
Lytham St Annes
Lancashire
FY8 4DG

Dear Mr Wood

Short inspection of Lytham St Annes Technology and Performing Arts College

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 2017 with Bernard Robinson, 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 May 2013.

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 well-established senior leaders have put in place thorough monitoring procedures so that you always have up-to-date knowledge of the school's strengths and of areas which need to improve. Together you identify and share strong practice, and act with determination and considerable experience to ensure that staff address weaknesses swiftly using well-devised strategies.

After the last inspection, you and your leadership team made effective plans to address all the identified areas for improvement. You have ensured that an even greater proportion of pupils exceed their expected levels of progress in mathematics, and progress in English is now quickly catching up. Inspectors asked you to make sure that teachers better matched lesson activities to the abilities of all pupils. It is clear that teachers now use much more detailed and regular assessment information to plan work which enables all pupils to achieve at an appropriate level. Inspectors also asked you to ensure that the curriculum for sixth-form students helped to accelerate achievement. In partnership with Blackpool and The Fylde College, you have provided a curriculum which has enabled improved progress of students on both academic and applied courses.

Governors of your school bring a wide range of academic, business and educational skills to their role and give of their time generously. They put the interests of pupils before any other considerations. During the inspection, they provided detailed and strong evidence of the benefits of their policy of providing a reduced curriculum for some pupils. Although this policy has restricted the numbers entered for the English Baccalaureate, it has provided much-needed time for some pupils to improve their results in English and mathematics and builds on the school's significant and long-standing strengths in performing arts. Evidence from last year shows that, on leaving Year 11, all pupils involved were able to pursue their chosen educational courses, apprenticeships or training at an appropriate level. The governors' decision to apply for the school to become an 11 to 16 institution, with no sixth form from September 2017, is also based on sincerely held convictions about what is best for the students at this school. They recognise that there are several local 16 to 18 institutions with greater financial and staffing resources to provide a much wider curriculum.

You and your staff know pupils very well both pastorally and academically. Your staff team provides a caring, supportive and well-structured learning environment where pupils feel safe, happy and academically challenged. During the inspection, we observed consistently good behaviour in lessons and around the school. Pupils were polite and courteous to teachers and to each other. They listened carefully and worked hard. Staff applied the agreed behaviour policy consistently well and skilled work with vulnerable pupils over time has ensured that no pupil ever has a fixed-term exclusion from school. However, school records and the views of a minority of pupils, staff and parents indicate that a small number of pupils do not always meet the school's high expectations of behaviour and this sometimes disrupts lessons. Your staff are tenacious in following up incidents of minor disruption in their determination to maintain a consistently calm and purposeful learning environment.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff have undertaken significant training and are aware that safeguarding pupils is the responsibility of all and, as a result, your school is a very vigilant community. Questionnaires indicate that parents have a high level of confidence in the systems and policies that you have put in place to keep your pupils safe from physical and emotional harm. Staff have carried out all the checks necessary to ensure that adults in school are suitable to work with children and young people.

In assemblies, during themed days and in everyday lessons, teachers and visitors help pupils to understand how to keep themselves safe from the dangers presented by the internet and social media. Strong firewalls and filtering systems ensure that no one can access inappropriate websites while in school.

Inspection findings

- Your own self-evaluation recognises that disadvantaged pupils and low-ability pupils have not been making as much progress as they should in comparison with other pupils nationally. You have made these pupils a high priority and have used the pupil premium funding to good effect. Your staff have analysed in detail the specific social, behavioural and learning needs of individuals and targeted funding very precisely to provide high-quality personalised support. During the inspection, we saw many examples of exceptionally effective interventions for disadvantaged pupils of all abilities. We also observed very effective teaching of disadvantaged and low-ability pupils in subject-specific breakfast clubs and in lessons. Detailed planning and frequent tracking of progress allow teachers to guide highly skilled teaching assistants in their work with individuals and small groups. You have invested well in middle- and senior-management responsibilities specifically to monitor closely and frequently the progress of disadvantaged pupils. There is clear evidence, from school assessments and the work in pupils' books and files, that disadvantaged pupils and low-ability pupils are now making stronger progress. However, although differences are diminishing, neither disadvantaged pupils nor low-ability pupils have yet caught up with the progress of their peers.
- Your own analysis of teaching and assessment information indicates that standards in English have been lower than they should be. Evidence from this inspection shows that you have now transformed the teaching of English by effective use of performance management and the recruitment of a very experienced subject leader and a significant number of English teachers new to the school. Pupils of all abilities enjoy English lessons and are now making strong progress.
- Improving reading scores and the enjoyment of reading has been a significant part of your drive to raise achievement in English. The introduction of a structured reading scheme has had an enormously positive impact on reading scores, especially those of low-ability pupils and disadvantaged pupils. Pupils' enjoyment of reading has also increased and the number of books they borrow from the library has almost trebled in two years. My inspector colleague heard readers of low ability and high ability, including those who were eligible for catch-up funding because of low scores at the end of Year 6. All read fluently, accurately and with enjoyment, and spoke very highly of the range of books available from the school library. One pupil said, 'There are so many exciting books for my reading level that I always find it difficult to choose.'

- The overall attendance of pupils in the school compares well with national figures but the overall attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is very low. During the inspection, your staff provided very detailed evidence to show that most pupils within the latter two groups attend well. A relatively small number of pupils with individual medical, emotional or social needs have extremely low attendance, which has a disproportionately negative impact on overall figures. I scrutinised in detail case studies for every one of these pupils and they show that staff work well with external agencies to help individuals to return to school or to support them when they cannot attend. Nevertheless, there still remain some disadvantaged and low-ability pupils who could attend regularly but do not.
- Teachers are subject specialists who use their knowledge well to plan for pupils' progress. Inspectors saw many good examples of the highly effective application of the school's feedback policy requiring pupils to improve their work in response to teachers' comments. All staff have very high expectations of the presentation and accuracy of work which are, consequently, of a very high standard across the school. Teachers and teaching assistants expect pupils, including the least able, to organise files of work well for the purposes of revision. Staff generate very positive relationships with pupils and motivate them with frequent use of praise and humour.
- Students in the sixth form speak with confidence about their future plans and what they need to do to achieve them. They are very positive about their education at this school from Year 7 upwards and all speak very highly of the sixth-form provision. The scrutiny of students' work and lesson observations, which inspectors conducted jointly with one of your senior leaders, indicate that teaching in the sixth form is at least good and that teachers and careers advisers have guided students to follow appropriate courses either at school or at Blackpool and The Fylde College which is conveniently situated on the same site.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- all pupils accept and follow the school's expectations of behaviour to avoid any disruption to learning
- the momentum gained in improving the progress of low-ability and disadvantaged pupils is sustained to enable these pupils to catch up with others with similar starting points
- the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and low-ability pupils increases to the level of their peers.

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

Liz Kelly
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I had discussions with you, your leadership team and members of the governing body. Jointly with you and members of your senior leadership team, inspectors observed teaching in the main school and in the sixth form. We spoke to a range of pupils in lessons, in discussion groups and at social times. Inspectors listened to pupils read and scrutinised reading records. With you and your senior and middle leaders, we looked at a wide range of pupils' work. We analysed the website and a range of documents, including the single central record, records of child protection and staff training, school self-evaluation and improvement planning. We also scrutinised anonymised case studies of pupils currently in the school. We discussed with senior leaders aspects of safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, the sixth form and the use of funding. I spoke to a cross-section of teachers. We considered 74 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including a number of free text comments made by parents. We also considered 81 responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire and 67 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. In addition, we considered responses to the school's own pupil and parent questionnaires.