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Mr Carl Sugden
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Sugden

Short inspection of King James's School

Following my visit to the school on 25 April 2017 with Stephen Crossley, 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 2011.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. A lot has changed in the last six years, including the appointments of several new members and associate members of the senior leadership team following several successful promotions to headship. The governing body has been reconstituted and you have restructured the pastoral support team. You have also appointed a family liaison officer and a new head of English.

Together, you have created a culture of high aspirations, where pupils feel supported to do well. A phrase heard often during the inspection was, 'same bar, different ladder', which sums up the ethos that you have created. All staff work together to ensure that all pupils aim high and are supported to achieve as well as they can. Pupils feel well supported and they enjoy learning in your school.

You have an accurate evaluation of the school's work and a secure plan for improvement, which recognises that although you have made significant improvements for disadvantaged pupils, there is still work to do. This involves ensuring that disadvantaged pupils' attendance improves further and that the improvements in progress for this group are sustained and increased.

Since the previous inspection, governors, school leaders and the local authority recognised that, over time, disadvantaged pupils have not achieved as well as their peers. You commissioned an external review in December 2015 and have used the

findings and the expertise of your staff to take immediate and robust action to prevent any further decline. Your effective strategies, which make good use of additional funding for pupil premium pupils, are ensuring that differences in progress are diminishing in every year group in the school. You recognise that the strategies you employ need to be flexible and personalised to each pupil, giving every individual the support to overcome their barriers to learning.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to improve the pace of learning by focusing on different pupils' needs and involving pupils more actively in their learning. You have achieved this by developing the ways pupils work and learn together. You were also asked to ensure that targets for pupils were challenging. Targets set are now in line with the achievement of the top 20% of pupils nationally. Staff and pupils work together to strive for the highest levels of achievement.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Thorough systems and procedures, which staff clearly understand, ensure that pupils are kept safe.

Pupils say that they feel safe and that they have staff they can talk to if they need help or advice. Pupils report that bullying is rare and say that when it does happen it is dealt with swiftly. Written records of bullying incidents confirm this.

Your personal, social, health, citizenship and economic education programme is ensuring that pupils learn about key issues such as online safety and child sexual exploitation. Pupils value what they learn in these sessions because it increases their awareness of issues that may affect them and helps them to understand risk.

Inspection findings

- Highly effective collaborative working between governors, school leaders and the local authority has led to the development of effective strategies to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Improving the progress of disadvantaged pupils is given a high priority and is included in performance management plans. As a result, the work in disadvantaged pupils' books has improved, they are making better progress and their attendance is improving.
- Leaders have put in place strategies to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils across the whole school. They have looked carefully at each year group to identify barriers to learning and are developing bespoke provision. For example, small group tutoring is supporting pupils to develop numeracy skills and a reading intervention programme is improving literacy skills. In some subjects, disadvantaged pupils are beginning to outperform their peers.
- Effective spending of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is ensuring that high levels of pastoral support are in place for those who are vulnerable. The recent appointment of a family liaison officer is helping to improve disadvantaged pupils' attendance and increase parental engagement with school. This support is

helping to improve progress for these pupils because they are attending school more regularly.

- School leaders ensure that teachers use assessment information to plan lessons that take into account the different abilities of pupils. This information is also used regularly to check which pupils are on track and if any are falling behind, allowing appropriate interventions to take place. As a result, the majority of pupils make good progress and remain on track to achieve well.
- The curriculum is well designed, allowing all options to be available to all pupils. Pupils are well supported and guided in their choices for GCSE. Options in Year 8 for technology and languages allow pupils to try out subjects before they make their final GCSE selections.
- A rich variety of extra-curricular opportunities ensures that pupils develop their skills outside of lessons. Activities on offer include a multitude of sports, charity work, music, art, science and photography to name just a few. Pupils say that they value these opportunities and levels of participation are good.
- Sixth-form provision remains good. This is because outcomes over time are strong. Careers advice and guidance ensures that students are on the right courses which link closely to their career aspirations. Students work hard in lessons and in independent study time. They are positive role models for younger pupils, often becoming involved in the wider life of the school by mentoring and supporting other pupils.
- Leaders take effective action to address areas of underperformance in the school. For example, action taken to improve outcomes in languages is resulting in a better experience for pupils, better progress and an increased number of pupils opting to study languages at GCSE. However, there is still work to do to sustain this improvement.
- Attendance is above the national average for pupils overall and there is an improving picture for disadvantaged pupils. Strategies such as mentors, tightening up the procedures for registration and the more consistent use of appropriate rewards and sanctions are contributing well to this improvement.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to their learning and they behave well. Conduct around school, in lessons and during social times is excellent. Pupils are polite and friendly. A new behaviour policy is being developed to ensure a consistently positive approach to discipline and to further reduce the number of days lost for learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the impact of strategies for improving disadvantaged pupils' progress and attendance is regularly evaluated, ensuring that changes are made to ensure sustained improvement and the best possible outcomes for this group of pupils
- steps continue to be taken to identify and tackle underperformance in subjects

such as languages to ensure that all pupils achieve well.

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

Yours sincerely

Debbie Redshaw

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, your senior leaders and some of your middle leaders, governors, your school improvement partner and your pupils. We gathered a range of evidence from conducting observation of learning and from scrutinising pupils' work jointly with your senior leaders. The inspection team checked and evaluated documents including your child protection policy, safeguarding records, school self-evaluation, school improvement plans, minutes from governors' meetings, evaluations of the quality of teaching and learning, performance management information and attendance information. Inspectors also took account of 145 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 83 responses to the pupil questionnaire and 129 responses to the staff questionnaire.