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Mr Richard Crane
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Crane

Short inspection of Joseph Rowntree School

Following my visit to the school on 9 May 2017 with Ofsted Inspector Elizabeth Cresswell, 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 November 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 are determined that the school will provide the best possible education for all pupils. You have a clear vision about how this will be done, which includes developing pupils' resilience and providing a wide range of non-academic opportunities, alongside ensuring that pupils are taught well in every lesson. This vision is shared by the governing body, middle leaders, senior leaders and staff. Since your appointment in 2013, you have focused relentlessly on improving the quality of teaching and ensuring that pupils in key stage 3 are fully prepared for the rigours of key stage 4. As a result, pupils are making better progress across the curriculum and differences between groups of pupils are diminishing rapidly. In addition, you have ensured that the sixth form has maintained the good quality of education it provided at the last inspection and this was not a focus of this inspection.

Middle leaders are reflective and work together well as a group. You have enabled them to support and challenge staff to ensure that teaching improves and pupils make even better progress.

The governing body is fully involved in the school at a strategic level. Governing body meetings are focused and challenging, with questions asked and answers considered carefully. Governors are self-reflective and have put in place training to ensure that they keep up to date with changes in the education system.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is highly effective. There are robust systems in place which ensure that pupils are kept safe and feel safe. You are not complacent about this, and regularly review and update the systems you have. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. There is a comprehensive programme in place to enable pupils to learn about issues they may face, in both the real and virtual worlds. This programme is enhanced by visits from external organisations, such as the police.

The pastoral support team has a range of experiences, which enable them to help and support pupils effectively. In addition, you have ensured that pupils have access to help for their mental health through the provision of a mental health nurse. As a result, pupils feel safe and know there is always someone they can talk to if they have an issue.

A number of parents, via Parent View, raised concerns about bullying. The inspection team took these comments into account and considered them carefully. However, the inspection team found that bullying is very rare and, when it happens, it is dealt with highly effectively.

Inspection findings

- You did a comprehensive review of the GCSE results in 2016, focusing on the differences between the progress made in English and mathematics by pupils supported by the pupil premium funding and their peers nationally; the differences were bigger than would be expected. As a result, the pupil premium funding is being spent even more effectively, and pupils supported by this funding are receiving even more bespoke support, both in lessons and across the curriculum. For example, a group of pupils were taken on an outward bound and mathematics course which enabled them to consider the practical application of mathematics. Your comprehensive and detailed tracking system ensures that all staff know exactly how well pupils are doing. Differences are closing rapidly across both key stage 3 and key stage 4 as a result.
- In both English and mathematics, extra staffing is used to ensure flexible setting. Inspectors saw this being used highly effectively in mathematics when a small group of pupils was given the opportunity to discuss mathematical concepts they found difficult in a supportive environment. Pupils mentioned that they found this support very useful. However, in some mathematics lessons, all pupils are given the same work to do. Often, this work is too easy for some pupils and too hard for others.
- The attendance of pupils is above the national average. Much work is ongoing to ensure that all pupils, and especially those supported by the pupil premium and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, continue to improve their attendance. Comprehensive and effective professional development for staff means that they are able to deal with behaviour issues better and, as a result, the proportion of pupils who are being excluded has fallen significantly. Pupils

say their lessons are rarely disrupted and, during the inspection, pupils behaved well both in lessons and around the school. Pupils are courteous to visitors and to each other. Pupils wear their school uniform well. However, you are fully aware that you need to continue to monitor the progress and attendance of all pupils, including those supported by the pupil premium and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to ensure that any dips in attendance and/or progress are dealt with quickly.

- In many lessons, teaching assistants are used very effectively to support the learning of pupils. As a result, the progress these pupils make in lessons is equal to their peers. However, you have identified, and it was noted during the inspection, that not all teaching assistants support pupils in this way.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- in mathematics, all pupils are given work which challenges them, regardless of their academic ability
- all teaching assistants are used to ensure that they support the effective learning of pupils
- they continue to focus on the progress and attendance of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding and those pupils who have special education needs and/or disabilities.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for York. 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, middle leaders 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, including the chair of governors. 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 90 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 43 responses to the staff questionnaire.