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Mr Richard Pierpoint
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Dear Mr Pierpoint

Short inspection of Carlton Academy

Following my visit to the school on 10 May 2017 with Ofsted Inspector Paul Sweeney, 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 April 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 is characterised by pupils who are well behaved, both in lessons and at other times around the school. There is a culture of respect and pupils are polite to each other and to adults. Staff expect pupils to achieve well and, as a parent rightly stated, 'Carlton Academy sets high expectations of its students.'

Since the last inspection, there have been several changes in senior leadership roles, including you becoming the headteacher. Some other senior leaders have now left and many new middle leaders and teachers have joined the school, including the head of department in science. You now share your time as executive headteacher with another school in the Redhill Academy Trust.

The points for improvement identified in the report following the inspection in 2013 have been tackled successfully. You have worked hard to eliminate less effective teaching and to ensure that teachers plan lessons that stretch and support pupils. Standards are now higher in many subject areas, including English and mathematics, and you now use the information you collect more effectively to support and challenge pupils with their learning. Attendance has risen and is now close to the national average for all pupils. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils, however, does not yet match that of their peers.

Your self-evaluation is accurate. You identify what is working well and those areas of the school that need to be strengthened. You have worked with governors on your local governing body and trustees of the multi-academy trust to ensure that the priorities for improvement are established. A scheme of delegation is in place, but trust leaders have not yet ensured that the local governing body fully understands its devolved powers so that it can monitor school improvements and challenge leaders more sharply. For example, at present, governors are not monitoring pupils' progress regularly enough or with sufficient insight.

Leaders have brought about improvements to the quality of teaching and there is more consistency in how well pupils achieve across a wide range of subjects. There is room for improvement, however, so that all teaching matches that of the best that already exists in the school. Pupils thrive when their teachers give them the opportunity to explore and extend their thinking in lessons. Leaders recognise that this aspect of teaching is an area for further development.

You, the governors and the trustees are fully aware of the improvements that still need to be made to ensure that all pupils reach the highest standards of which they are capable. The attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils in 2016 were close to those of their peers overall and leaders have correctly identified the areas where further improvements need to be made, particularly in science.

Safeguarding is effective.

A culture of safeguarding is evident in all aspects of school life. The trust and leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are appropriate and fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality.

The school is a safe place. The overwhelming majority of parents believe that the school keeps their children safe and cares for them well. Pupils stated, and most parents agreed, that there are few concerns about bullying and when incidents occur, they are dealt with quickly and effectively by staff. The curriculum provides pupils with the opportunity to explore how to stay safe. Pupils say that the school provides helpful information, for example about how they can keep safe online.

All staff are fully aware of all aspects of safeguarding as a result of regular and effective training. The school keeps records of training of staff, including those who join the school part-way through the year.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding procedures take account of the latest guidance issued and that all required employment checks are carried out before staff appointments are confirmed.

You and the staff team work well with external agencies. Cases that need referring by the school are dealt with promptly and timely action is taken.

Pupils increasingly enjoy coming to school and this is shown in their improving attendance. However, disadvantaged pupils' absence, including persistent absence,

has been higher than that of their peers in the past few years. The school has taken steps to rectify this with some success. There are positive signs that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is now catching up with that of other pupils.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and the trust have a clear understanding of what is working well in the school and what has led to improvements in pupils' achievement over the past few years. The positive impact of their actions can be seen in the achievement of current pupils. They are also clear about what still needs to be done. The local governing body, however, is not taking a sharp enough approach to monitoring and evaluating the progress being made with its improvement priorities. This is largely because the trust has not clarified sufficiently the powers and responsibilities it has delegated to the local governing body.
- Overall, pupils achieve well, particularly the least able. The headteacher and the executive principal from the trust have worked hard to ensure that the quality of teaching has improved. In particular, teachers are now planning more effectively to stretch and support pupils, and this is reflected in the improved standards. For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils in Year 9 were able to solve increasingly complex problems using Pythagoras' theorem because the teacher had prepared them extremely well. The strongest teaching in the school provides pupils with opportunities to explore and extend their thinking. Leaders recognise that this good practice has not yet been extended throughout the school.
- The achievement of pupils has continued to improve or remained high in many subjects since the previous inspection. In 2016, boys' achievement improved along with girls', but at a slower rate since the previous inspection. Leaders have taken steps to ensure that boys are currently making similar progress to that of girls. Similarly, pupils that enter the school with average or above average performance are now making similar progress to that of their peers.
- Students in the sixth form are now making strong progress, particularly those studying applied courses. All students studying A-level courses in Year 12 are taking AS examinations in 2017, as they have done for the past few years. Leaders recognise that this is holding back some students from really excelling in the new A-level qualifications at the end of Year 13. Consequently, they plan to allow students to focus on the full A-level qualification for the whole of their sixth-form experience.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils, including those who are most-able, has improved since the previous inspection. Standards in 2016 were slightly lower than in 2015 in English and mathematics, largely because a small group of disadvantaged pupils joined the school late, following the closure of another school. Leaders and teachers worked hard with these pupils, who made progress in the short time they were at the school. However, leaders recognise that disadvantaged pupils do not yet receive the support they need to accelerate their rates of progress.
- Leaders have taken action to improve rates of attendance for disadvantaged pupils and for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They

have been successful in raising the attendance of these groups, which are now closer to the national average for all pupils. Strategies have included sending letters home to parents when a pupil is absent and making more effective use of attendance meetings with parents at an earlier stage. The below average attendance of disadvantaged pupils remains a barrier to their making faster progress, although the school is successfully implementing a range of intervention strategies to allow them to catch up.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the local governing body fully understands its delegated powers and responsibilities so that it can monitor improvement priorities more sharply and hold leaders to account more effectively
- greater emphasis is placed on implementing strategies to improve the attendance and progress of disadvantaged pupils so that they match those of other pupils nationally
- all teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to explore and extend their thinking and thrive in their learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Jamie Clarke
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, the inspectors held meetings with a range of staff, including the headteacher, other senior leaders, curriculum leaders, the leaders responsible for provision for disadvantaged pupils, designated staff for safeguarding, staff responsible for attendance, the members of the local governing body and trustees from the multi-academy trust. Inspectors made a series of visits to lessons, some jointly with a senior leader, including in the sixth form.

They met with groups of pupils to discuss the work of the school and talked with them also in lessons and informally during breaktimes. The views of parents expressed using Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and those collected through inspection surveys of pupils and staff, were considered. Inspectors also looked at a range of documents, including safeguarding records, the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation, a range of policy documents, and other information about pupils' attainment and progress, behaviour, and attendance.