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Mrs Alison Lusuardi  
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Dear Mrs Lusuardi

### **Short inspection of The Langley Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 28 November 2017 with Catherine Davies, Ofsted Inspector, and Janet Pearce, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), 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 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 improving because of the very clear leadership that you and the executive principal provide. You, together with governors, trustees and the senior leadership team have an accurate understanding of the school and use this to identify strengths and priorities for improvement. You usefully obtain external validation of the quality of your work through working with external consultants and a range of other local schools.

The highly experienced and dedicated team of local governors and trustees has acted decisively to strengthen leadership within the school. Last summer the headteacher was promoted to become the executive principal of the three schools within the multi-academy trust. This new role allows him to prioritise improving staff recruitment and retention across the three schools and maintaining high standards in each of them. At the same time you were promoted from head of school to become headteacher. You have wasted no time in implementing a package of staff training and support with a clear focus on developing and sharing first-rate teaching and learning. This new approach is particularly valued by staff. Governors have restructured leadership across the school, including appointing an additional deputy headteacher and making some changes to middle leadership. This reorganisation has reinvigorated the school. Together, you have worked hard to recruit, train and retain a dedicated and hard-working team of teachers. Consequently, you have

maintained high standards of teaching and learning, improved behaviour and ensured that the school is now fully staffed.

The Langley Academy's vision states your desire to 'provide the highest achievement for all and a welcoming, imaginative and creative environment which enriches the lives of all involved'. Governors and leaders actively promote this vision through fostering a shared love of learning together with high aspirations for all pupils. The school's focus on 'museum learning' enriches the learning environment and curriculum. The head of museum learning works with staff to provide engaging learning contexts which are particularly valued by pupils and teachers. As one parent commented: 'My son and daughter have both made spectacular progress under the guidance of passionate teachers... The leadership team, along with the staff, are an absolute asset to the school community and in helping shape the next generation of learners.'

Leaders, governors and trustees have ensured that the school has continued to focus on the areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection. Detailed and accurate self-evaluation is coupled with precise improvement plans where a clear priority is given to maintaining and improving the quality of teaching. In addition, a new assessment system has been implemented to help staff to develop a greater awareness of pupils' current progress. However, this new system is not consistently used by teachers to help them refine their teaching to meet the needs of target groups such as the most able.

In 2016, pupils made above average progress in English, mathematics and the humanities by the end of key stage 4. In science and modern foreign languages, pupils' progress from their starting points was in line with national averages. In 2017, provisional performance information shows that pupils made similarly above average progress, both overall and in English and mathematics. While noteworthy improvements have been made, leaders and governors rightly acknowledge that more needs to be done to improve academic achievement in the sixth form. They know they also need to raise standards in a minority of lessons, particularly in science, and to provide more challenge for the most able pupils. The provision for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils is a strength of the school. The pupil premium funding is used well to ensure that bespoke support enables these pupils to make more than average progress from their starting points.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is well led and managed. Most teachers plan interesting lessons. Many of them are very effective at using probing questioning to encourage deeper thinking and reflection and ensure a swift pace of learning. Leaders are aware that in a minority of lessons teachers offer less challenge and the pace is slower. Effective systems are in place to support these teachers to improve their practice. Most pupils know their targets, and their work in their books demonstrates that they make strong progress over time, particularly in English and mathematics.

Sixth formers are aspirational and feel well supported by their teachers. Leaders ensure that there are opportunities for students to take part in work experience and

receive relevant careers information and guidance. However, leaders' strategic oversight of the sixth form is less well developed than elsewhere in the school. The assessment and monitoring systems are not fine-tuned enough to ensure that progress in the sixth form matches that found elsewhere in the school. More needs to be done to ensure that students make consistently strong progress in all their subjects and receive a broader range of enrichment experiences.

Morale is high and staff recognise that the school is improving. Pupils and sixth formers confidently welcome visitors, are proud to share their work and enjoy working with their teachers. There is a sense of pride, both in The Langley Academy and in the outcomes pupils achieve, that is shared between staff, governors, trustees and pupils.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your team have ensured that the school has robust safeguarding arrangements and that there are well-understood systems in place to manage safeguarding requirements. There is a culture of vigilance, and the school's records are carefully maintained and detailed. Governors and trustees are very knowledgeable about safeguarding. They ensure that this aspect of staff's work is given high priority and meets current requirements. Leaders are proactive and ensure that regular communication between key staff and other agencies enables timely and effective support to be made available for vulnerable pupils. All staff have current training to an appropriate level so they know what to do should they be worried about a pupil. The school's website is professional and up to date. It contains useful information for parents, including much that relates to safeguarding and the promotion of e-safety.

Overall pupils' attendance is above the national average and has been for some time. You recognise that pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities had lower attendance rates in the past. The school has worked closely with parents and outside agencies to support improvements.

Bullying and discrimination are rare and pupils report that they know how to keep themselves safe, including when on the internet. Pupils know whom to go to should they have any concerns, and trust staff to resolve them.

### **Inspection findings**

- During this visit, as well as evaluating safeguarding arrangements, inspectors focused on specific aspects of the school's provision including:
  - how effectively leaders ensure consistently high outcomes across the curriculum, including for the most able pupils and those with low prior attainment
  - how effectively teachers meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities
  - how well leaders have maintained low levels of exclusion and improved

attendance for those who have SEN and/or disabilities

- students' achievement in the sixth form.
- Leaders set ambitious targets and the majority of teachers ensure that the most able pupils are regularly challenged through tasks that promote deep thinking and the linking of different ideas. Where this works best, the most able pupils are challenged to engage with, and successfully complete, high-level extended tasks and test questions. As a result, these pupils develop confidence and high aspirations together with the knowledge and skills to achieve them. However, leaders are aware that more needs to be done to embed new assessment and tracking systems, and to ensure that the most able pupils are consistently challenged across all subjects.
- Leaders regularly review the curriculum and ensure that appropriate key stage 4 courses and pathways are made available to pupils. Provisional published outcomes information identifies that pupils made above-average progress in 2017 and achieved an average of nearly a quarter of a grade more than pupils from similar starting points. Progress in English and mathematics was significantly above average. Pupils made average progress across languages, science and humanities.
- In English and mathematics, teachers make good use of the school's assessment and feedback policy to challenge all pupils to refine and improve their work and make strong progress from their starting points. Leaders have invested in training and support which has ensured that the quality of teaching in English and mathematics and across most of the curriculum is consistently good. Consequently, current pupils continue to make strong progress.
- In some lessons, while most pupils make good progress, pupils' books demonstrate that a minority of teaching is less effective. Leaders are aware of this, and support strategies are in place to ensure that all teaching is consistently as strong as the best examples in the school.
- The school's focus on 'museum learning' is used to very good effect to enrich and extend the curriculum. Pupils particularly value the fact that the school offers families subsidised trips to visit museums. In addition, the head of museum learning works with subject leaders to provide a wide range of stimulating learning resources. One strong example was seen where the leaders of museum learning and English had worked together to share Victorian artefacts with pupils. This raised their awareness of the social and cultural context of *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens. As a result, Year 7 pupils were deeply engaged in discussing the text, and confident to apply subject-specific vocabulary to their own detailed descriptions.
- Strong leadership, including good liaison with feeder primary schools and parents, ensures very effective provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The SEN coordinators are passionate about wanting the best for every pupil, and relationships between staff and pupils are strong. As a result, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress in school.
- Leaders have invested in extra staffing and a range of resources to support disadvantaged pupils. Last year, some disadvantaged pupils made less progress

than their peers by the end of key stage 4 in some subjects. This is changing. Governors ensure that the pupil premium funding is used effectively to offer a bespoke range of interventions and in-class support designed to close these gaps.

- Overall attendance has been above the national average for some time. You are very aware that the attendance of some groups, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, was below that of their peers in the past. You have rightly prioritised a range of initiatives designed to reduce any gaps. Meticulous tracking of attendance by leaders is allowing quicker intervention, and the attendance of all groups of pupils is improving.
- Pupils' conduct in lessons and around the school is very good. Historically, exclusions have been very low. Good relationships and communication, together with effective behaviour support systems, ensure that exclusion rates are falling even further.
- In the past, sixth formers have made slightly below-average progress in their academic and applied general courses. This was the case again in 2017. Leaders are aware that progress in science and in information and communication technology A levels was weaker than in other subject areas. Students' work shows that some are not sufficiently well prepared with the independent study and research skills required for the move from Year 11 to Year 12. Responding to these issues, leaders have implemented more thorough monitoring of teaching this year and sourced external support to improve assessment and tracking. Senior leaders are taking appropriate action to review the curriculum, improve teaching and ensure more consistently strong rates of progress across the different subjects.
- Students value their good relationships with staff, their careers education and the opportunities for work experience they have in the sixth form. However, a more outward-facing approach is needed to provide students with richer and a broader range of experiences during their non-qualification activities.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- consistently high expectations, pace and challenge are maintained throughout the school, particularly in science
- more accurate tracking and monitoring of students' progress and a broader range of enrichment experiences improve outcomes in the sixth form
- more accurate assessment fuels suitable, and consistently engaging and challenging, learning activities for the most able pupils across the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Matthew Newberry  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors visited 19 lessons and looked at learning jointly with senior leaders. We spoke with pupils in lessons and looked at a range of their work as well as meeting with pupils and sixth formers both formally and informally. We observed pupils' conduct at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Meetings were held with yourself, the executive principal and senior leaders. I held a meeting with the chair of the local governing body, the chair of the trustees and the sponsor.

Documentary evidence, including policies, strategic planning documents and analyses of pupils' achievements, was evaluated. During the course of the inspection, I considered 18 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 82 responses to a pupil survey and 77 responses to a staff questionnaire. Inspectors also scrutinised documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, and examined records of governing body meetings and reports of visits from external consultants.