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Mr Will Thompson
Principal
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Dear Mr Thompson

Short inspection of Forest Academy

Following my visit to the school on 6 December 2017 with Hayley Follett, 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 September 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 clearly want to do the best for your pupils. Leaders have identified the strengths of the school and areas which need to develop further. The school's continued improvement is supported well by the governing body and the trust.

You have worked to tackle the areas for improvement from the last inspection. Strategies to improve teaching have led to improved pupils' outcomes, including for the most able. The focus on behaviour for learning and 'restore and rebuild' conversations has been effective. Records show that incidents of poor behaviour and exclusions are decreasing. However, you are not complacent, recognising that more work needs to be done to raise the consistency of teaching and learning so that all learners make equally strong progress. This is a particular challenge because of the high number of pupils who join the school at different times in the year.

On the day of the inspection, pupils were self-assured, polite and very willing to talk to inspectors. They spoke warmly about being part of this school community and the good support they receive from their teachers. Sixth form students are proud to be part of the school and relish the leadership opportunities they are given, for example mentoring younger pupils. Staff are very supportive of your leadership. You have developed a culture which nurtures teachers and provides opportunities for them to develop their professional careers. Some challenges remain with behaviour

and bullying, but school staff deal with them fairly and swiftly. The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, say they would recommend this school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that relevant safeguarding policies and procedures are in place. Staff have received annual training and know that they should act immediately if they have concerns about a pupil. Staff are knowledgeable about the signs of concern and about their responsibilities to report information immediately, for example about possible radicalisation or female genital mutilation. However, a small number of teachers who spoke to inspectors could not immediately identify specifically to whom they should make referrals. While this was swiftly rectified during the inspection, inspectors suggest that this is a matter that should be revisited with all staff.

Vulnerable pupils are closely monitored. Records are detailed, showing swift action with pupils and their families. The school works effectively with a range of external agencies when the occasion arises.

Pupils spoken to by the inspectors say they feel safe in school and are confident that they could speak to a teacher if they had a concern. They said there is a small amount of bullying but they felt it is dealt with effectively. Pupils are taught how to be safe through assemblies and citizenship lessons. As a result, they were clear about how to keep safe online and when travelling to and from school.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, four areas of focus were agreed. The first of these was pupils' attendance. This was because, for the last three years, attendance has been below national averages including for those pupils who are persistently absent.
- Strategies put in place to improve pupils' attendance are beginning to make a difference. These include using the educational welfare officer to work with families, increasing the number of fixed penalty notices issued, and a rewards system for pupils with good attendance.
- Attendance is slowly improving. Attendance since the start of this academic year has risen and the number of persistent absentees has reduced. The school is aware of the need to be relentless in following up absence because of the negative impact this has on pupils' progress.
- The second area of focus for the inspection was the progress of sixth form students studying A-level courses. This was because, in 2016, students' progress and examination results for A-level subjects were noticeably lower than in vocational courses. Inspectors looked at examination results and students' work, and visited classes.
- Leaders have provided teachers with useful information about students' starting points. This supports teachers' precise planning to meet the needs of all

students. Clear monitoring and tracking systems are in place which enable students who fall behind to be given additional support. Entry requirements for subjects have been reviewed to ensure that students are enrolled on the right courses for their ability. The school has introduced a three-year programme of study for pupils who did not achieve the qualifications to start A levels. This provides a foundation year prior to starting level 3 courses. Leaders have provided useful guidance to target pupils who would benefit from this pathway.

- As result of this work, in 2017, outcomes for students on A-level courses improved. Provisional information suggests that progress overall was more positive. Inspectors looked at students' work and saw evidence of good progress being made by current students. For example, in A-level mathematics, students had been given feedback to improve an assessed piece of work on quadratic equations. They had then sat a similar assessment and the majority of students significantly improved their results.
- The third area of focus was the progress of pupils who join the school midway through the year. This was because there are high levels of mobility at the school, with pupils joining on a weekly basis. Because of this, published examination results in 2016 accounted for the progress of only around two thirds of the Year 11 cohort. There was no prior attainment information at key stage 2 for the remaining one third of the cohort.
- Leaders have put in place detailed and reliable systems to monitor and track the progress of these pupils. This helps teachers plan lessons to meet their needs. Pupils who join midway through the year with limited English receive personalised support outside the classroom to develop their language skills.
- As a result, in some classes, these pupils are making good progress. However, in other classes, progress is not as good because teachers' expectations are too low. Work in books looked at by inspectors showed that some pupils are using the guidance given by teachers to improve their work. However, some pupils ignore or do not understand this guidance and, consequently, repeat the same mistakes. A key area for development is ensuring that teachers have consistently high expectations for these pupils, and that they are always sure that these pupils understand any errors corrected by teachers.
- The fourth area of focus was support for non-specialist teachers. You told me that financial and staffing constraints have led to the deployment of some non-specialist teachers in a number of subjects at key stage 3. Inspectors visited classrooms, looked at pupils' work and spoke to teachers.
- Curriculum leaders have helped non-specialist teachers by providing them with comprehensive teaching materials. Mentors support non-specialist teachers through providing feedback on lessons and developing subject-specific skills.
- Inspectors saw some good teaching by non-specialist teachers which was leading to pupils making good progress. A sample of Year 7 history books showed good progress in pupils' development of historical skills. For example, work describing the Battle of Hastings demonstrated analysis of sources to explain why the battle had started. In Year 8 science, pupils were provided with opportunities to carry out experiments which led to progress in their skills of

evaluation. All this gives confidence that leaders are working hard to ensure that non-specialist teaching is well supported and effective.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers have consistently high expectations for pupils who arrive at the school at different times in the year, especially those who speak English as an additional language, and that teachers always check that these pupils understand any errors that have been corrected
- staff continue to develop the successful strategies to combat absence, and particularly persistent absence.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Parker
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspection began with a discussion with you about your self-evaluation of the school and what you considered to be the strengths and areas you were working on. Together we agreed the key lines of enquiry that the inspectors would follow during the inspection. Inspectors looked at school documentation, including behaviour and exclusion logs, and minutes of governing body meetings. Inspectors visited lessons, looked at work and spoke with pupils on their own and with you and other members of the leadership team. Inspectors met with the head of sixth form, attendance manager, designated safeguarding lead and three groups of pupils. The lead inspector spoke with the chair and chief executive officer of the Beacon Multi-Academy Trust. In addition, inspectors considered responses to the staff survey, pupil survey and Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents.