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Mrs Lesley Gwinnett  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Gwinnett

### **Short inspection of Tarleton Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 2018 with Annette Patterson, 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 2014.

### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have a clear vision for the school and want pupils to flourish and be the best they can be. You, senior leaders and governors leave no stone unturned in your quest to drive continuous improvements across the school. The impact of your team's efforts is evident in the strong progress that pupils have made. In 2016 and 2017, the overall progress of pupils in the school was above those achieved by pupils with similar starting points. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

The school is a family-oriented and supportive community. Your pupils are polite and respectful and wear their uniform with pride. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Pupils appreciate what staff do for them. They enjoy a wide range of sports, trips and visits. Typically, pupils comment that teachers are 'kind and helpful'. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social skills are well developed. The vertical tutoring system, in which pupils of different ages belong to the same tutor group, fosters care and empathy among pupils. Pupils have opportunities to learn about a range of faiths and cultures and visit different places of worship.

Since the last inspection, Tarleton Academy has been designated as a teaching school and you have been recognised as a national leader of education. You are now the executive headteacher of Tarleton Academy and Wellfield High School. Governors have restructured leadership across the school, including appointing a

head of school. Along with some senior leaders, you share your time between Tarleton Academy and Wellfield High School. You are a member of a local school cluster of primary schools. Leaders work in close partnership with the local authority.

A large majority of parents are very positive about the school, commenting that pupils are supported in their learning and are encouraged to reach their full potential. As one parent said: 'The school is very well managed. Teachers are approachable and my child is very happy at the school.' The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to another parent.

Governors are ambitious and firmly committed to the school. As one governor said: 'We want the children to be happy, well-rounded and reach their potential.' Governors have a wide variety of skills and expertise which they use both to support and challenge you and other leaders. They have a firm grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

You and your leaders hold teachers to account effectively for the achievement of their pupils. Middle leaders are really clear about the school's priorities for improvement. They feel well supported and appreciate senior leaders' willingness to listen to and act on their suggestions. The very large majority of staff who responded to the online survey said that they are proud to work in the school. Staff value the opportunities to share ideas for teaching and learning, as well as good practice.

At the last inspection you were asked to ensure that pupils, particularly middle-ability pupils, were being challenged so that they could make even faster progress. In response to this, you have raised expectations and have provided training to improve teachers' questioning skills so that they are better equipped to probe pupils' understanding. Most teachers ensure that they plan learning in such a way that all pupils are challenged to achieve their very best. The school's own information shows that the progress of middle-ability pupils is in line with the progress of other pupils. However, you are aware that you need to continue to focus on ensuring that disadvantaged pupils, particularly boys, achieve the highest standards.

A second area for improvement identified at the last inspection related to eliminating the small amount of low-level misbehaviour which occurred in some lessons. You have introduced behaviour systems which encourage positive attitudes to learning. Inspectors found the school to be a calm and orderly environment.

You were also asked to make sure that pupils achieve equally strongly in all subjects. Since the last inspection, you have reviewed the curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils. The curriculum is broad and balanced, with a wide variety of academic subjects on offer including BTEC sport in key stage 4. Systems to track pupils' progress are rigorous and enable leaders to intervene when pupils are at risk of underachieving. The impact of the actions that you have taken can be

seen in the improvement in pupils' outcomes over time. In 2017, progress was above average in English and modern foreign languages. You acknowledged that pupils' progress in mathematics was broadly average in 2016 and 2017. You took swift action to improve the quality of teaching in mathematics and have put new leadership in place. However, you agreed the need to build on existing work to increase pupils' progress in mathematics further. You recognised that pupils did not make good enough progress in geography and physical education in 2017. You have strengthened teaching and provided more support for pupils in both subjects. Inspection evidence shows that the progress of pupils in these subjects is now improving.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Records are maintained carefully and accurately. Checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils are thorough. Staff have completed all the relevant and recent training so they know what to do if they have any concerns about pupils. Leaders work closely with families and external agencies and are tenacious in following up any concerns to ensure that your pupils are safe and supported. Pupils feel safe on site. Leaders makes sure that pupils understand the dangers of extremism, radicalisation and exploitation through the personal, social, health and economic education programme. Pupils spoken to during the inspection say that bullying is rare and that if it does occur, it is dealt with effectively by staff. The overwhelming majority of parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, felt that their children are safe and well cared for.

### **Inspection findings**

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry, one of which related to the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. Over recent years, too many of these pupils have not been attending school regularly and this has had a negative impact on their academic progress. Leaders and the family support worker are working hard with families to stress the importance of not missing valuable learning. Regular attendance is celebrated through rewards. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are now attending school more frequently.
- Pupils made broadly average progress in mathematics in both 2016 and 2017. Disadvantaged pupils did not make as much progress in mathematics as other pupils nationally. You have focused on improving the outcomes of pupils in mathematics. The recently appointed lead practitioner is adding further strength to the department. Current assessment information and work scrutiny show that pupils continue to make good progress. Nonetheless, you recognise that there is still more to do to ensure that pupils achieve as well in mathematics as they do in English and some other subjects.
- In 2016 and 2017, disadvantaged pupils made less progress than other pupils nationally in a range of subjects. You have carefully identified the barriers for these pupils. Leaders check on the progress of disadvantaged pupils closely. Staff provide intervention sessions to help these pupils catch up. Leaders also use the

pupil premium funding to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are able to participate in the full range of opportunities to enrich learning, such as trips and visits. Inspection evidence shows that these pupils are making better progress in all year groups. However, you have rightly identified the need for disadvantaged pupils, particularly boys, to make accelerated progress.

- You recognise that the number of exclusions has been higher than national figures over the past few years. This is partly because you have set high expectations for the behaviour of pupils, which staff consistently reinforce. Exclusions over time are reducing. You have strategies in place to support challenging pupils and use fixed-term exclusions as a last resort. Pupils who spoke with inspectors stated that behaviour in lessons is good and that their learning is rarely disrupted.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress that pupils make in mathematics continues to improve, so that it is as strong as the progress that pupils make in English and some other subjects
- the difference between the progress of disadvantaged pupils, particularly boys, and that of others nationally diminishes more rapidly.

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

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this short inspection inspectors met with you, senior leaders and a group of middle leaders. I met with four members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. Accompanied by senior leaders, we visited a number of lessons to observe learning and scrutinise pupils' books. We met with a group of pupils and spoke to others in lessons and around the school. We took account of 90 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including 88 free-text responses. We also considered the views of 44 staff and 112 pupils through Ofsted's online questionnaires. A range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' attainment and progress. We evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies about keeping children safe, records of training, safeguarding checks and attendance and behaviour information. Inspectors also undertook a review of the school's website.