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Miss Catherine Huddleston
Principal
St Wilfrid's Church of England Academy
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Dear Miss Huddleston

Short inspection of St Wilfrid's Church of England Academy

Following my visit to the school on 22 February 2018 with Julie Bather and Clive Hurren, Ofsted Inspectors, 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 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 have steered the school successfully during a period of change in leadership and staffing. You have developed a strong leadership team with the capacity to improve the school further. The school's Christian ethos and strong values underpin everything. You, along with your staff team, have created an inclusive and supportive community in which pupils from a diverse range of backgrounds work well together. You have a crystal-clear vision and want pupils to grow as individuals and have high aspirations. Staff say that they are well supported in developing their skills further. Staff morale is high.

Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school, and this is shown by their above-average attendance. A typical comment from pupils is: 'Teachers are helpful and push me to get my target.' Pupils behave well in lessons, at breaktimes and around the school. They wear their uniform with pride. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive.

Pupils in the hearing-impairment unit benefit from a mix of small, focused teaching held in the unit and effective support in mainstream classes. Pupils relish the wide variety of extra-curricular activities, trips and visits. They develop good leadership skills in various roles, for example as house captains and school councillors. The vertical house system promotes loyalty and respect. Sixth-form students are effective role models for younger pupils. For example, students are prefects and mentors for younger pupils.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Many of the parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire felt that their children are well looked after and make good progress. They said that they would recommend the school to others. One parent commented: 'The school has an excellent transition and induction programme for new Year 7 pupils and my child has benefited from these.'

Since the last inspection, the membership of the governing body has changed substantially. Governors have a wide range of skills and expertise. They appreciate the hard work of staff but are not afraid to challenge them where necessary. One commented, 'We want children to be the best that they can be.' Governors have a strong understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement of the school. They actively seek training, including in safeguarding, to ensure that they continue to fulfil their duties effectively.

You and your senior leaders know the school's strengths and the areas which need to be developed further. You have increased the level of accountability for leaders and they are taking effective action to improve the achievement of pupils. As a result, pupils make good progress across the school. In 2017, progress was above average in English and science at the end of key stage 4.

Governors, senior leaders and staff have responded well to the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. For example, you have continued to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Staff provide pupils with challenging and ambitious targets. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those learning English as an additional language are well supported in class.

You were asked to provide greater challenge for the most able pupils, especially in mathematics. In most lessons, teachers use questioning effectively to target pupils of different abilities and to probe and deepen their understanding. However, you recognise that there is still some work to do to ensure that the most able pupils are consistently challenged. You have rightly identified that you need to continue to focus on ensuring that pupils' progress in mathematics improves further.

Following the last inspection, you introduced a range of strategies to improve achievement in the sixth form. Teachers are given opportunities to observe each other teaching and share strong practice. Students receive appropriate guidance when selecting courses. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets students' needs. Leaders effectively track, monitor and evaluate the impact of teaching and learning strategies on students' progress. Students say that they are well supported and prepared for exams. Provisional 2017 outcomes and inspection evidence indicate that students' progress is good overall.

You recognise that you could do more to ensure that disadvantaged pupils attend more frequently and achieve the highest standards.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. You, together with your staff and governors, ensure that everyone prioritises the safety and well-being of pupils. Records are detailed and of high quality. Staff and governors have received appropriate training. Leaders work well with a range of external agencies to support vulnerable pupils. Referrals are made effectively and in a timely manner. The safeguarding governor makes regular visits to the school and takes an active role in monitoring any concerns.

Pupils say that the school is a safe place to be. Pupils say that there is rarely any bullying. They also know that they can talk to an adult in the school if they are worried about anything. The overwhelming majority of parents who completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, felt that their children were safe.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of this inspection, we agreed on several key areas to investigate. The first concerned leaders' actions to improve the rates of attendance for disadvantaged pupils. This was because, in the past, levels of absence and persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils have been higher than those of other pupils. Leaders and the attendance officer monitor attendance rigorously. The family worker and leaders work closely with families to improve attendance. The pupil premium funding supports eligible pupils in attending the breakfast club. Regular attendance is celebrated through rewards and incentives such as trips. The impact of this is that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has risen alongside a reduction in their persistent absenteeism. However, you recognise that the attendance of some of these pupils needs to improve further.
- As part of this inspection, we examined the effectiveness of leaders' actions to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. In 2016 and 2017, disadvantaged pupils made less progress than other pupils nationally in a range of subjects. Leaders have commissioned an external review of provision and acted on the findings. A new senior leader for the pupil premium has taken up post and has improved the monitoring and evaluation of the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders are aware of the barriers for these pupils. All teachers now consider disadvantaged pupils' needs specifically in their planning. The pupil premium funding is now used more effectively to provide interventions and support for this group. Inspection evidence shows that disadvantaged pupils are making better progress. However, you have rightly identified that there is more to do to ensure that the differences in progress diminish further.
- My line of enquiry relating to the progress of pupils in mathematics matched your own concerns. You had already identified that pupils did not make good enough progress in mathematics in 2016 and 2017. Disadvantaged pupils did not make as much progress in mathematics as other pupils nationally. You have put in place strategies to address this. The recently appointed strategic leader for mathematics is adding further strength to the department. There is now a greater focus on problem-solving and reasoning. Inspection evidence shows that

progress in mathematics is improving. However, you acknowledge that this remains an area for further development.

- Leaders have successfully developed teachers' questioning skills. Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to plan interesting tasks and explain ideas to pupils clearly. Most of the activities set by teachers are closely matched to the ability of pupils. However, you acknowledged that there is further work to do to ensure that the most able pupils are challenged to achieve as well as they should.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they further improve the attendance and progress of disadvantaged pupils
- the quality of teaching in mathematics is consistently strong so that pupils make good progress
- there is a continued focus on providing sufficient challenge for the most able pupils so that they reach the highest standards of which they are capable.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Blackburn, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Blackburn with Darwen. 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 we met with you, senior leaders and a group of middle leaders. I met with three members of the governing body, including the chair. I also held a telephone conversation with a representative of the diocese. 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 168 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, including 163 free-text comments. We also considered the views of 113 staff and 595 pupils through Ofsted's online questionnaires. We looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' attainment and progress. We also evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep children safe; records of training; safeguarding checks and attendance and behaviour information. I also undertook a review of the school's website.