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Elizabeth Horrigan  
Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Horrigan

### **Short inspection of Harlington School**

Following my visit to the school on 25 April 2018 with Catherine Davies and Niall Gallagher, 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 January 2015.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your team have been successful in bringing about further improvements to the quality of teaching and to pupils' behaviour and achievement.

Since the last inspection, pupils' progress in their best eight subjects has been at least in line with the national average. For some pupils, and in some subjects, progress has been significantly above average. Last year, pupils who joined the school with below average attainment, and the most able pupils, achieved well by the end of Year 11. Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds continue to achieve well. You and your staff have used the additional funding provided to support these pupils very effectively. Pupils' achievement in mathematics, which was less strong than in English at the time of the last inspection, improved markedly last year, and was significantly above average. The progress of the most able pupils and those from disadvantaged backgrounds was in the top 10% nationally.

You and your senior team recognise that some middle-ability pupils did not achieve as well as they could. You have rightly identified the need to improve teachers' skills in providing activities and resources which are sufficiently challenging for all pupils. You also continue to prioritise strategies to raise the achievement of White British pupils. This group of pupils continues to achieve less well than other pupils in the school. Achievement in a small number of subjects also dipped last year. The actions you and your staff are taking to tackle this dip are proving to be effective.

Achievement in the sixth form is consistently in line with the national average in A-level and vocational subjects. You are rightly proud that high proportions of pupils progress to university, with increasing numbers securing places at universities which belong to the Russell Group. You know that more work is needed to ensure that more of the most able sixth-form pupils achieve the highest grades.

At the last inspection, the school was asked to improve the quality of teaching. Improvements to pupils' overall achievements reflect the successes you have had in this area. You have revised the school's approach to the checks made on teaching in order to provide an accurate view of what teaching is typically like. The strong culture of professional trust and respect you have cultivated means that teachers welcome discussions about their practice. They value guidance about how their teaching might improve. Teachers who need extra support are matched well to the staff who are best placed to coach them. You have strengthened the impact of middle leaders by providing them with training opportunities to deepen their skills. As a result, you have given middle leaders more autonomy in the way they carry out their roles. Inspectors found some inconsistencies, however, in the quality of checks made on pupils' achievements in their books. Some unfinished work has not been picked up either by the class teacher or their line manager, for example.

In the lessons visited during the inspection, pupils were mostly working well. Particularly effective learning was seen across a range of English lessons. In these lessons, the pupils were highly focused as they worked on their examination technique. The teachers made clear to pupils the time available for each activity, and ensured that the deadlines they set were met. Good-quality questioning extended pupils' thinking and ensured that pupils explained their answers well. In other lessons, pupils sometimes work less productively and low-level chatter is not systematically challenged by their teachers. While teachers are ready to support pupils when they find work difficult, they do not always ensure that all pupils, including the most able, are suitably challenged.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your staff ensure that pupils feel safe and ensure that the curriculum provides them with good information about potential risks to their well-being. Pupils understand about issues such as child sexual exploitation, forced marriage and gang-related knife crime. Staff are alert to the signs that pupils might be vulnerable to radicalisation. They work effectively with local faith leaders and with the police to ensure that vulnerable pupils receive the necessary support and guidance. Some pupils described how they had changed their behaviours as a direct result of the teaching they had received, for example about online safety.

Pupils told inspectors that there are many staff they can approach if they have concerns about their well-being, and they know who the specially trained child protection staff are, should they have any serious concerns. Pupils said that bullying occurs infrequently, and is dealt with immediately by staff. The school's records confirm this.

Leaders are very mindful of the safeguarding implications of high pupil mobility into and out of the school. They are tenacious in working with the local authority, for example, to

track down pupils who do not return to school after the summer holidays. Leaders do not take pupils off roll until every step has been taken to find out where they are. They know that pupil safety is more important than headline attendance figures. Robust arrangements are in place to ensure that pupils who receive part of their education elsewhere attend well and are safe and protected.

Despite some very strong practice, inspectors found some weaknesses in the quality of record-keeping. For example, actions taken to follow up child protection concerns are not always recorded in sufficient detail or clearly dated, as is required. While inspectors judge the school's safeguarding arrangements to be effective, written records do not always reflect the high standards of care and protection that are provided.

### **Inspection findings**

- Leaders provide high-quality support for pupils who join the school part-way through their secondary education, including the considerable numbers of pupils who join the school from overseas. Minutes from meetings of the governing body show that governors keep a close eye on the attendance, well-being and achievement of these pupils. Well-established procedures are in place to ensure that the needs of pupils who arrive mid-year are quickly identified and met. This includes high-quality provision to equip pupils with the English language skills they need in order to access the curriculum. Good assessment arrangements ensure that any unmet special educational needs, or other needs, are identified quickly and pupils subsequently receive the support they need. Leaders track the achievement of this group of pupils carefully to ensure that they achieve as well as others in the school. In discussions, pupils who joined the school from overseas were unanimous in their praise for the school. They described how they were quickly made to feel welcome by staff and pupils, and how they had improved their attainment in their time at the school.
- Pupils who have disabilities are well served by the school. The highly experienced team of staff who work in the specialist resource base provide information of very good quality to staff in the main school. This ensures that the needs of these pupils are met well and that they have equality of opportunity. The pupils who met with inspectors were highly complimentary about the support they receive. They all reported that they feel safe in school. They also spoke very positively about the quality of careers information they receive. Staff ensure that these pupils make good gains in their learning and personal development.
- White British pupils continue to attend, behave and achieve less well than pupils from other backgrounds. There are some encouraging signs, particularly in the reduction in the proportion of White British pupils who are temporarily excluded from school. You have strengthened provision to identify and support pupils at risk of exclusion, including through a broad range of programmes delivered in the onsite satellite school. Pupils who have received support, for example in managing their behaviour or dealing with emotional difficulties, speak very positively about the impact of the satellite school. One, typifying the views of some of the others, said: 'If it wasn't for the satellite school, I wouldn't be here.'
- Staff are making every effort to improve the attendance of White British pupils, but progress in this area remains stubbornly slow. Inevitably, the achievement of pupils

who do not come to school regularly is impaired. This year, you have allocated specific responsibility to a member of staff for raising the attendance and achievement of White British pupils. The post holder is passionate about her role, and committed to improving the life chances of this group of pupils. Currently, however, it is not easy to assess, precisely, the difference the role is making because the success criteria set out in the action plan are not sharp enough. During the inspection, I asked you and the school's governors to consider whether sufficient time has been allocated to the role to ensure that it has the desired impact.

- In 2017, by the end of Year 11, pupils' achievement declined in a small proportion of foundation subjects, such as physical education (PE), the arts, and design and technology. This was a result of a range of factors, including difficulties in recruiting and retaining high-quality staff, teachers' lack of experience in delivering some parts of the curriculum and, in some cases, the complex needs of some of the pupils affected. Leaders of these subjects have devised clear action plans to remedy the weaknesses that affected pupils' outcomes last year. Staffing has improved and specialist staff now teach all these subjects. The PE curriculum has been improved to provide pupils with additional opportunities to demonstrate their practical skills, for example in rock climbing. The school's assessment information indicates that the decline in pupils' achievement in these subjects last year is being addressed so that it does not reoccur.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- procedures for recording information about safeguarding are reviewed to ensure that records are always maintained consistently, systematically and with the necessary detail
- they maintain a sharp focus on improving the attendance, behaviour and achievement of White British pupils, ensuring that the actions they are taking are tested against clear success criteria
- they develop teachers' skills in providing work that stretches and challenges all groups of pupils, particularly middle-attaining pupils, and ensure that teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve in the time provided
- middle leaders are effective in making checks on the quality of pupils' work, so that unfinished work or underachievement is quickly identified and tackled.

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel Burton  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors observed teaching in English, mathematics, science, business studies, computing, design and technology, music and religious education. They also observed teaching in the specialist resource provision and in the satellite school. They met with governors and senior and middle leaders. They spoke by telephone to the local authority's designated officer for safeguarding. They also spoke by telephone with staff from a sample of the alternative providers used by the school. Inspectors spoke with pupils in lessons and in formal meetings, including with pupils who have disabilities and those who joined the school part-way through their secondary education. They considered a range of documents, including reviews of the school carried out by the local authority and the school's self-evaluation document and improvement plan. They scrutinised the school's records about safeguarding. Inspectors considered responses to the online questionnaires from 27 parents, 20 members of staff and one pupil. They also had regard for the eight parental comments received through the Ofsted free-text service.