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Mr A D Meikle
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Meikle

Short inspection of Lady Manners School

Following my visit to the school on 15 May 2018 with Tracey Ydlibi and Richard Vasey, 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 February 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

School leaders do not have an accurate picture of provision in the school; their evaluation of teaching is too generous, and is not based on rigorous collection of evidence. Although the school improvement plan accurately identifies the main priorities for improvement, actions lack detail and success criteria are vague. Leaders have not taken sufficiently effective action to tackle the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. Many of the weaknesses identified at the last inspection remain.

Governors are hardworking and take a keen interest in the school. However, they do not effectively challenge leaders to demonstrate the impact of actions taken to bring about improvement, nor ensure that leaders act quickly enough to identify and address any weaknesses in provision.

Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are considerably higher than the national average. Although attainment remains above the national average by the end of Year 11, pupils' progress is slower than that seen nationally. Disadvantaged pupils make particularly slow progress. They do not catch up with their peers and leave the school with levels of attainment well below the national average.

The last inspection identified the need to improve the quality of teaching by providing consistent challenge for pupils and ensuring good and targeted support for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have not taken sufficiently effective action to address teaching on occasions when it is less than good and, as a result, its quality is too variable. Although in some lessons pupils are engaged and challenged, and teachers' questioning is effective in helping them learn, this is not a uniform picture. Too often teaching is not well targeted to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. In addition, the school's feedback policy is not applied consistently.

You have developed some areas of strong and effective practice, including the quality of provision in the sixth form, extra-curricular activities and the care and guidance provided for pupils. It is clear that staff have due regard for the welfare of pupils. The vast majority of pupils behave well and are proud of their school. This positive view is shared by a large majority of parents and carers. The culture of care is demonstrated by the way that older pupils support younger pupils in their work.

Students make good progress in the sixth form because of the consistently high expectations of teachers, and teaching that meets students' needs. Students speak positively about the support provided by staff, both during their studies and in preparation for either the next stage of their education or the world of work. Sixth-form students take advantage of the many opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and the wider community.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that policies and procedures for keeping pupils safe are effective, robust and fit for purpose. There are detailed systems in place to check that all adults at the school are suitable to work with children. Regular training ensures that staff are up to date with safeguarding issues and understand their responsibilities. Governors receive appropriate training and have a good understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. This contributes to the culture of vigilance that exists in the school.

The school has prioritised safeguarding in the appointment of key staff to provide expertise. For example, the multi-agency team worker works well with families and a range of external agencies to provide targeted and comprehensive pastoral support for vulnerable pupils. Record-keeping is thorough and concerns are followed up quickly.

Pupils feel safe and cared for well. They know who to go to if they have a problem and they are well informed about how to keep themselves safe. They reported that incidents of bullying and intolerance are rare and, in general, are dealt with effectively by the school. The curriculum provides well-targeted guidance to ensure that pupils know how to stay safe, including when they are online. Assemblies and presentations from external organisations raise awareness of a range of important topics. Staff and parents agree that pupils feel safe at school.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, inspectors focused on a number of key areas. These were identified by considering the areas for improvement from the previous inspection and reviewing current information from the school. The key areas included: the impact of the school's work to improve the academic progress of disadvantaged pupils; the effectiveness of provision for pupils who have special needs (SEN) and/or disabilities; and the success of the school curriculum in meeting pupils' learning needs.
- The pupil premium strategy lacks detail and clear success criteria. The spending of the pupil premium funding is not clearly targeted to benefit disadvantaged pupils and, as a result, has a limited impact on accelerating their progress. Although leaders point to a range of strategies, leaders do not evaluate the impact of these sufficiently. Improving the outcomes for this group of pupils remains a key priority for the school.
- Inconsistency in the quality of teaching and low levels of challenge in too many lessons, hamper the ability of disadvantaged pupils to make good progress. Individual support for disadvantaged pupils, although well intentioned, has not enabled enough of them to catch up with their peers.
- As a group, disadvantaged pupils' attendance has been consistently low in recent years. In 2017, it was well below the national average. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent from school is considerably higher than the national average. Leaders have not taken sufficiently effective action to tackle this significant weakness.
- Leaders have reviewed their approach to identifying pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Although their progress still lags behind their peers, these pupils are now accurately identified. Leaders ensure that additional funding to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is spent appropriately. Additional adults provide good support for these pupils in class and parents are positive about the provision for their children. The school is working towards the 'Dyslexia Friendly School' award.
- The school has developed a broad and balanced curriculum, which gives an appropriate range of options at each key stage. Good care and guidance is given when pupils reach important points of transition, for example as they approach the end of Year 11. As a result, the proportion of pupils who move on to appropriate destinations is extremely high. They appreciate and take full advantage of the extensive range of extra-curricular activities available.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they develop a strategic approach to improving the school, with clear and ambitious targets
- the quality of provision, including the use of the pupil premium funding, is accurately and systematically evaluated, and swift action is taken to adjust this where disadvantaged pupils are not making enough progress

- leaders monitor the quality of teaching to ensure that it consistently meets the needs of all groups of pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged
- disadvantaged pupils attend regularly.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Heery
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, other senior leaders, pastoral staff and five members of the governing body. The lead inspector held a telephone discussion with an adviser from the local authority. Inspectors visited 34 lessons, some jointly with a senior leader. They met groups of pupils from all key stages and spoke with pupils informally in their lessons. They also looked at pupils' work to evaluate the quality of their learning. Inspectors scrutinised the school's safeguarding arrangements and records, including the school's record of recruitment checks on staff. They reviewed records of attendance and examined different types of evidence provided by the school, including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspectors considered the views of 225 parents through their responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and Ofsted's free-text service. They considered the 111 responses to Ofsted's survey for staff and 153 responses to Ofsted's survey for pupils. Inspectors also considered an email communication from a parent.