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Mr Andrew Taylor  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Taylor

### **Short inspection of Upper Wharfedale School**

Following my visit to the school on 15 May 2018 with Louise Greatrex, 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 October 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You, your head of school and governors share a passionate commitment to the progress of every child, firmly underpinned by an unrelenting drive to create an inclusive pupil-focused community. Your highly motivated and outward-looking staff consider themselves to be well supported and guided to focus on each pupil as an individual. You and your staff know your pupils well and this knowledge enables a level of personalisation, which extends to all aspects of school life, including the curriculum. This focus has enabled pupils to make above average progress. Parents speak very positively about the school, they value the care that you give and, as a result, their children enjoy coming to school.

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors recognised the many strengths of the school, including the quality of teaching in some subjects, and the visible sense of community. They also identified the need to secure greater progress for pupils by providing the right level of challenge, particularly in English. Leaders have successfully addressed this issue and the changes that you have made have had a positive effect on the progress of your pupils. Inspectors also highlighted the need

for a more consistent approach to assessment. The introduction of specific 'teacher, peer and student feedback' reflects the decisive action that you have taken to improve assessment. You and your highly effective leaders work well together and accurately identify areas of strength and areas that need further development. As a result, you take decisive and timely action to improve the school.

The previous inspection report also stated that some subject leaders did not then make the best use of information about their pupils' progress when setting priorities for their subjects. Your detailed and well-structured tracking system has enabled you to address this issue and highlight where insufficient or considerable progress is being made. Pupils are able to articulate with clarity their progress in each subject, and they are aware if their progress is judged to be 'insufficient', 'some', 'sound' or 'considerable'.

Your development planning also highlights the need to ensure appropriate challenge, catering for the full-ability range, including the most able pupils, across all subjects. This is shared by your staff, and collectively you are committed to continually improving provision for the most able pupils. However, you recognise that provision for stretch and challenge is not yet fully developed.

You have correctly identified the need to develop the confidence and resilience of pupils, as, on average, pupils enter the school with below average levels of attainment. Leaders recognise that some of your pupils lack confidence in their ability to succeed and that this can be a barrier to rapid progress.

The school is a calm, safe and orderly environment. Pupils behave well in lessons, when they move between classes and during social times. Pupils make strong progress because of their positive attitudes to learning and the excellent rapport that they have with staff. The school provides a wide range of experiences for pupils so that the curriculum is enriched. These enrichment opportunities or 'deep learning days' support and promote pupils' personal development and welfare effectively. The values of respect, tolerance and humility permeate the school and leaders' active promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is tangible.

Governors are passionate and capable. They bring a range of skills and experiences to the table. They use these skills and their experiences to be increasingly involved in the school's work. Governors speak positively of the conversations that they have with pupils, in order to gain an insight into the life of the school, and in reviewing reports that school leaders have submitted. This involvement keeps governors well informed and empowers them to further challenge leaders. Governors are determined to support, yet challenge, you and other leaders so that the school continues to improve. They are highly committed to the school community and the school's future and they are resolute in their desire for its continued success.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding procedures are well managed and fit for purpose. Staff are regularly trained in safeguarding procedures, including keeping pupils safe from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, which they clearly understand.

Everyone at Upper Wharfedale School makes safety and welfare a priority. Pupils justifiably say that they feel safe at school and parents rightly agree. Information on anti-bullying and computer safety teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe, including from cyber bullying. Your 'deep learning' days are highly effective in ensuring that pupils are educated about a broad range of issues about life in modern Britain and how to live in a responsible and safe manner.

Pupils say that bullying is rare but that if it does occur they know that staff deal with it quickly and effectively. Pupils have confidence in staff to respond swiftly to concerns that they raise and to deal with things in a supportive manner. Parents echo this support and highly praise this area of the school's work. All pupils are known and cared for. The particular focus and care given to the most vulnerable pupils is highly valued by pupils, parents and carers.

Pupils' safety is high profile and it is routinely discussed at staff meetings and governors' meetings. Staff comment positively about any required additional meetings, to ensure that the particular concerns about individual pupils can be shared and that staff are trained to meet their needs. Adults know what action to take if they have concerns about a pupil's welfare, and you promptly involve the right agencies when appropriate.

## **Inspection findings**

- You are highly ambitious for each and every pupil in your school because you firmly believe that 'they deserve the best'. You have developed a collaborative and supportive ethos across the school. Your unrelenting focus on progress is shared by all staff and has created a community focused on improvements. All staff work closely together to achieve your clearly stated aims to improve the school and make it outstanding.
- You and your leadership team have refined and improved procedures for tracking and monitoring the progress of pupils and groups of pupils, especially the disadvantaged. Such procedures give you the information you need to work alongside middle leaders to help pupils make strong progress. As a result, leaders have identified key areas that need attention, for example the consistency of progress in modern foreign languages, history and computing, and they are taking the necessary action to secure improvements. Leaders also recognise the need to improve outcomes and provision for the most able pupils, and this is recognised in your development plan.
- Pupils' behaviour witnessed during the inspection was impeccable. There was no disruption to learning seen and pupils were polite and courteous at all times. Pupils speak extremely positively about the school and many travel significant

distances to attend. They say that they are known well, cared for and encouraged. Pupils and staff have a passionate commitment to the school. Pupils affirm that behaviour is good. They appreciate the restorative approach adopted by staff and are encouraged by the balance of challenge and support in the classroom. This has a positive impact on behaviour and learning.

- In lessons observed by inspectors, some pupils were overly reliant on adult support and direction and lacked confidence in their abilities. Pupils also reported that they worry about targets and find the 'insufficient' indicator on their reports disheartening.
- Leaders have devised and developed a curriculum that meets the needs of their pupils. You are not complacent but are aware of the challenges as well as the benefits of a running a small school. Your curriculum is personalised, focused and enables the pupils to make strong progress.
- Your work with pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is centred on achieving the best possible outcomes for each individual. This individual attention is recognised and highly praised by parents and pupils, both of whom greatly appreciate the work of the school. The provision for supportive work, such as 'senior studies' and 'GCSE Pod', enables disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities to take more responsibility for their learning.
- Governors regularly visit the school and make regular checks to see how well the school is doing by talking to the pupils and reviewing the work of leaders. They ask incisive questions to focus leaders' thinking and drive improvements. Governors are aware of the school's challenges and opportunities. They are firmly committed to the personalised approach adopted by leaders and have a clear understanding of the curriculum decisions made in the interests of the pupils.
- The progress of the relatively small proportion of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is a key focus for your work. Although published data shows these pupils did not achieve as well as others in 2017, the school's information about current standards indicates that the differences are diminishing. This is supported by the evidence in pupils' books, which shows them making good progress over time.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers consistently use pupil information to plan learning that sufficiently challenges the most able pupils and meets their needs
- pupils' resilience and confidence are actively fostered and developed so that they become self-assured learners
- teachers more rapidly identify pupils' common misconceptions and act to ensure that they are consistently and rigorously addressed.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North Yorkshire. This letter

will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Murray  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Meetings took place with you and members of your middle and senior leadership teams and other members of staff. Meetings also took place with the chair and other members of the governing body, a group of pupils from Year 10 and key stage 3 pupils. Inspectors examined the school's self-evaluation document, the school improvement plan and monitoring records concerning teaching, attendance, exclusions and leavers' destinations. Inspectors also examined pupils' work from a variety of subjects, year groups and abilities, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Inspectors met with the school improvement partner from the local authority. The record of checks on staff was scrutinised and relevant safeguarding procedures were reviewed. Learning in each key stage was observed by inspectors alongside members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors received and considered 83 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey, 38 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 78 responses to Ofsted's parent survey, Parent View.