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Mr Paul Scarborough
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Dear Mr Scarborough

Short inspection of Up Holland High School

Following my visit to the school on 21 June 2018 with Dympna Woods, 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 March 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since you took up post in September 2016 you have acted determinedly and successfully to raise standards. You and the governing body have not shied away from difficult staffing decisions which have improved teaching as well as the quality of senior and middle leadership. You have developed a strong senior leadership team with a balance of experience and new ideas. You have gained the loyalty of staff. They understand that the decisions that you made were for the long-term good of the school and they can already see the positive impact. They say that they are now much more accountable for pupils' progress but feel well supported in making the necessary improvements.

Along with the local authority and the governing body, you have rectified a significant budget deficit. You managed this while improving pupils' standards and the quality of teaching. A significant factor in the deficit budget was falling pupil numbers. You have built strong community links and worked well with primary schools so that the declining trend has now reversed.

The local authority and governing body reacted swiftly to work with you to address the disappointing examination results in 2017. The headteacher of an outstanding secondary school, who is a national leader of education (NLE), has worked effectively in partnership with you and the local authority to review weak areas and

provide help and guidance for staff. The NLE also arranged direct and practical support from subject and aspect specialists. She said that the way in which you and your staff have embraced help and guidance is exemplary. She, the local authority and subject specialists returned to review the impact of their support and written reports indicate that it has been significant in improving pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. Your leaders and teachers no longer need intensive external support to maintain good practice.

You have introduced strong assessment systems which include standardisation involving subject departments, senior leaders and other schools. Staff are now confident that their assessments are accurate and will be reflected in GCSE results.

Governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have reflected on their own effectiveness and have made changes to the way that they operate. They bring educational, business and financial skills to their role and now use these to hold you to account by asking forthright and detailed questions. Their systems for managing the performance of staff are now very effective.

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors asked leaders to develop and share the effective teaching that exists in the school and ensure that teachers challenge pupils to think deeply. They also asked leaders to make sure that a greater proportion of pupils make better progress in mathematics and increase expectations of pupils in all subjects. In addition, the inspection report highlighted consistency of middle leadership as an area for improvement. You have addressed these areas with considerable success.

You identified modern foreign languages as an area in which teaching and examination results have been consistently very strong. To share this practice with less successful subject departments, you seconded the head of modern foreign languages to the senior leadership team and gave her responsibility for developing more effective teaching and subject leadership. She has been very effective in disseminating ways of planning learning and of monitoring the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils. Most importantly, she has given teachers in other departments opportunities to observe and develop effective teaching strategies. The links arranged by the local authority have complemented this work. Your staff have also benefited from observing best practice by subject leaders and senior staff from an outstanding high school in a neighbouring local authority.

Developing pupils' deeper thinking has been a considerable focus for continuing professional development, particularly in relation to teachers questioning pupils skilfully to extend their knowledge and understanding. This strategy has contributed to the improved progress which the considerable proportion of most-able pupils currently in the school have made. Teachers' expectations of pupils across all subjects have increased. In mathematics, expectations of how pupils use reasoning to solve problems are now high and better match the demands of the new GCSE examinations. The appointment of a lead practitioner in mathematics has increased the capacity of the department to continue and extend improvements and share best practice.

Subject leaders are now effective in monitoring teaching and pupils' outcomes. They have learned from substantive and seconded senior leaders and from middle leaders at the outstanding school with whom you have been working.

You have already identified that recent improvements in the progress of disadvantaged pupils should be consolidated to ensure that they catch up rapidly with their non-disadvantaged peers. You also recognise that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils more recently arrived at the school, especially boys, remains a weakness.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school maintains a strong team of pastoral staff who provide very effective support and guidance for vulnerable pupils.

Safeguarding procedures meet all current requirements and are well documented in clear policies. Governors, staff and pupils understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Staff and governors carry out regular checks on the suitability of adults in the school to work with children. Your staff work very well with external agencies to support pupils and their families who need help. They show determination in ensuring that agencies fulfil their obligations. All staff have undertaken the required training so that they can recognise if a pupil is in danger.

Pupils are aware of the dangers of the internet and social media and know which staff to contact if they have any concerns. The pupils whom I and my colleague spoke to said that they feel very safe in the school.

Processes for ensuring the safety and well-being of the small number of pupils who are educated off site are strong. Leaders of off-site institutions said that your staff contact them frequently to check on the pupils in their care.

Inspection findings

- In 2017, in almost all subjects, pupils did not achieve the GCSE results of which they were capable. I was interested to know if the situation had improved for pupils currently in the school. As a result of better leadership of subjects and improved teaching, pupils now make better progress across a range of subjects. Pupils throughout the school benefit from teachers' strong subject knowledge. Developments in the quality of education in the school since you took up post have had a very positive impact on pupils in Year 10 and at key stage 3. Externally moderated teachers' assessments and inspectors' analysis of pupils' work indicate strongly that they are making good progress and reaching their academic potential.
- The school's assessment information, including the results of mock examinations, and inspectors' analysis of pupils' work, indicate that Year 11 pupils this year are in a position to achieve better results than last year.

However, past inconsistencies in teaching and middle leadership mean that their progress in most subjects, although improved, is not as strong as it should be.

- You have eradicated the weakest teaching. With the support of external subject specialists, you have identified where inconsistencies remain and have put in place support and challenge which are already having a positive impact on the quality of teaching. More effective procedures for teachers' appraisal have contributed significantly to these improvements.
- Standards in modern foreign languages, physical education and music remain high. I wanted to find out why achievement in modern foreign languages has been consistently in the top 20% of all schools nationally. In your school, teaching in this subject is characterised by meticulous attention to detail in the analysis of pupils' weaknesses and subsequent intervention. Teachers match work very closely to the requirements of the GCSE examination and are relentless in ensuring that every pupil knows and understands every aspect of the examination requirements. They balance this with making learning enjoyable and generating very positive relationships.
- For the last two years, your disadvantaged pupils made weak progress when compared to their peers in the school and other pupils nationally. I wanted to know what leaders were doing to address this and whether they have used the funding for disadvantaged pupils to good effect. You have changed the leadership of the pupil premium funding and plans for spending are now precise and focused. There is a good balance of academic and pastoral support, with funding targeted well to provide staff specifically dedicated to working with disadvantaged pupils. Differences between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and that of their peers are still evident but are diminishing, especially in Year 10 and at key stage 3.
- In 2016 and 2017 you accepted on roll a significant number of pupils from a local school that closed. The majority of these pupils are disadvantaged and came to you with a legacy of poor attendance. While the attendance of disadvantaged pupils who have been with you since Year 7 has improved, that of more recent entrants to the school, particularly boys, has not. However, your pastoral and mentoring teams have worked hard with families and, for disadvantaged pupils overall, they have reduced persistent absence considerably. The longer pupils have been subject to your school's expectations, the better their attendance is.
- I wanted to know whether you had been successful in improving the achievement of boys in relation to girls. Strategies such as 'You've been claimed' ensure that all pupils, including underachieving boys, are required to attend extra lessons after school to work on specific weaknesses. The tenacity of your staff has resulted in very good attendance at these sessions and has contributed to an improvement in the performance of boys, especially in English and mathematics. The proportion of boys in the school who are disadvantaged is greater than that of girls. As a result, the strategies funded by the pupil premium have also helped to diminish the difference between the progress made by boys and that made by girls. In some subjects, including mathematics, the trend has been reversed.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff continue to work with the families of the more recently arrived disadvantaged pupils who do not attend school regularly
- differences between the academic progress of disadvantaged pupils and that of peers and other pupils nationally continue to diminish.

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

Yours sincerely

Liz Kelly
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I had discussions with you, your leadership team and members of the governing body. Jointly with you and members of your senior leadership team, I and my inspector colleague visited classrooms. We spoke to a range of pupils in lessons, in discussion groups and at social times. With subject leaders we looked at pupils' work. We analysed the website and a range of documents, including the single central record, records of child protection and staff training, the school's self-evaluation and the improvement plan. We discussed with senior leaders aspects of safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and the use of funding. We spoke to a cross-section of teachers. We considered 52 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including a number of free-text comments from parents. We also considered 52 responses to Ofsted's online pupils' questionnaire and 35 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.