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Mr Levon Newton
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Newton

Short inspection of The Priory Belvoir Academy

Following my visit to the school on 19 June 2018 with Julie Robinson 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in May 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders have high expectations and are aspirational for the school, with a clear focus on improving performance. You and the effective leadership team have been ably supported by the Priory Federation of Academies Trust, formally since October 2017. Your appointment and membership of a new multi-academy trust have had a transformational effect on the school.

You and the trust are working together to develop the school's strengths and plan further improvements. The school's development plan clearly identifies what needs to be done to further the school's effectiveness. Your colleagues' responses during the day of the inspection made it clear that they recognise and appreciate the changes that you have brought into effect. There is a tangible sense that expectations have been raised. This is a well-run, efficient and increasingly effective school.

Pupils behave in an orderly manner and respect each other, staff and visitors, creating a calm learning environment. Pupils select from a widening range of extra-curricular activities, which develop their confidence and resilience, within the school and the wider community. Pupils are cared for through an effective pastoral system. Since its introduction, the 'Peacock Pride' rewards and values programme has made a rich contribution to pupils' personal and character development and has much improved this aspect of the school's work. A typical parental comment reflects this:

'This is an incredibly caring school that knows its pupils well and strives to do the best for the individual.'

Effective governance has further improved the school's systems and procedures. The local governing body brings a breadth of skills and experiences to the school's leadership. Governors are effective in holding leaders to account on a local level and their work complements well that of the trustees of the multi-academy trust. Trustees work well with school leaders to ensure a keen focus on continuous improvement. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They monitor action plans, teaching and learning, and assessment information effectively to direct the school's development better. They have provided strong, evidence-based support to leaders in improving teaching across the school

The previous inspection report called for middle leaders to evaluate the impact of initiatives to bring about rapid improvements to pupils' progress. Your strong leadership, supported by an energetic new team, has ensured that middle leaders have a clear focus on raising standards. They know how to make changes that will bring improvements in the long term. For example, teachers have been coached and offered local and trust-wide professional development to improve their questioning techniques. Teachers are now questioning effectively to probe pupils' understanding and knowledge. Middle leaders have been instrumental in implementing improvements effectively.

Since September 2017, leaders brought significant changes to the programme of professional development for teachers and how they monitor the quality of teaching. These changes have had a positive impact on teaching across the school. Leaders' actions have had a positive impact on pupils' progress. Teachers' plan learning well to meet pupils' needs. However, sometimes pupils are not consistently challenged with work that demands more of them in all subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that the policies and procedures for keeping pupils safe are fit for purpose. Access to the school buildings is secure and well monitored. All visitors are properly checked on entry. The recruitment and induction procedures for new staff are robust. Thorough checks are made on all staff and volunteers to ensure that they are suitable to work with children.

Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding ensure that all record-keeping is of a good quality. Effective processes are in place to follow up issues as they arise in a timely way. The school works well with a range of external agencies across three local authorities to support pupils and to make sure that they are kept safe.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in the school and that they are well cared for. They know who they can talk to if they have any worries or concerns. Pupils are informed about how they can keep themselves safe, including how to stay safe online. School records show that incidents of bullying are rare. Pupils told

inspectors that the school is a friendly place and under the new trust any bullying would be dealt with by staff effectively. An overwhelming majority of parents and carers are confident that pupils feel safe at the school.

Staff and governors fully understand their safeguarding responsibilities. You have ensured that regular training keeps staff up to date with procedures and potential safeguarding risks. Safeguarding is a strength at this school and you have established a culture of safeguarding that permeates throughout the school.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection we considered leaders' actions to improve progress and attainment in modern languages. We looked at leaders' work to raise attainment in mathematics, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. In addition, we considered the way in which pupils are prepared to follow qualifications suitable for their learning needs.
- Pupils' progress in modern languages has been below the national average for the past two years. You have made changes to the curriculum for modern languages and to the way this subject is taught. Pupils in key stage 3 now have a secure set of language skills and therefore a solid foundation on which to manage the transition to GCSE study. However, there has not yet been sufficient time for these interventions to become well established at key stage 4.
- Strong leadership in mathematics has led to improving progress and attainment. Disadvantaged pupils have achieved as well overall as other pupils nationally in their GCSE examinations. The school's current assessment information indicates that disadvantaged pupils are continuing to make good progress and their attainment is drawing closer to that of other pupils in the school.
- Leaders have put in place systems to track the performance of disadvantaged pupils and monitor the quality and effectiveness of in-class support. For example, teachers in the mathematics faculty meet each week to review and share teaching, learning and assessment strategies. Initiatives such as memory recall tests and support sessions have helped develop pupils' mathematical knowledge, so they can apply it in different situations.
- Leaders have not developed careers advice, information and guidance sufficiently. Pupils said they would like more careers advice and guidance. At key stage 3, pupils wanted more support in helping them make their choices for GCSE. Pupils in key stage 4 were aware of the choices available to them at post 16 but wanted more information to help them make better informed choices.
- Leaders have reviewed the teaching and curriculum in key stage 3. Changes are helping pupils to build successfully on their achievements at key stage 2. They are better prepared for key stage 4 by having a good grounding in the knowledge and skills they will need to achieve highly. This is helping pupils to be better prepared for GCSE and vocational qualifications at key stage 4. Pupils told inspectors that they are now being given a more challenging and enjoyable learning experience.
- With support from the trust, there are now secure systems in place to monitor

the work of the school. In 2017, the school saw significant improvements in the progress and attainment of pupils across a range of subjects at GCSE. However, there continues to be some variation in pupils' progress across different subjects.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- reduce the variation in progress so that pupils perform equally well in all subjects
- ensure that pupils are challenged consistently in all subjects
- develop careers education, advice and guidance to provide pupils with information about their options.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer of the Priory Federation of Academies Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Leicestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Sweeney

Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors spoke with you, senior leaders and other leaders, as well as members of the trust board and governors. We met with pupils both formally and informally across Years 7 to 10 to discuss their views about the school. Together with senior leaders, inspectors visited a range of classes across both key stages to observe teaching and look at pupils' work. Inspectors scrutinised the school's safeguarding arrangements and record-keeping, including the school's record of recruitment checks and child protection records. We looked at attendance and behaviour records.

Inspectors looked at a range of additional documentary evidence. This included the school's self-evaluation, development planning and data on pupils' progress and attainment.

Inspectors considered the views of 55 parents through their response to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and Ofsted's free-text service.