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Mrs Gina O'Connor
Headteacher
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Dear Gina O'Connor

Short inspection of West Coventry Academy

Following my visit to the school on 10 July 2018 with Rob Steed, Ofsted Inspector, and Sara Arkle, 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 November 2014.

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.**

At the previous inspection, you were charged with accelerating pupils' attainment and progress in mathematics, ensuring that pupils complete work that is matched to their abilities and needs and providing feedback that aids pupils' learning. These areas have not been effectively addressed.

Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes to the school. Your school, a former all-girls' school, has been married with the neighbouring boys' school on your school site. This has effectively resulted in two schools operating on one school site in 2016/17. A change in the school's culture, high staff turnover and difficulties in recruiting teachers in some subjects contributed to a decline in behaviour and the quality of teaching. Consequently, pupils' outcomes declined, and their progress by the end of Year 11 was weak in 2017. You have successfully stemmed this decline, and some improvement is now evident, especially in the behaviour of pupils. Due to these unique circumstances and the fact that both schools continued to operate separately during that academic year, published achievement information for 2017 only accounts for girls' achievements and does not include that of boys, which was even weaker.

You and your senior leaders have managed this turbulent time and challenging transition arrangements with tenacity and integrity, resulting in what is now one mixed-sex school. You have taken the decision to rename your school 'West Coventry Academy' and introduce a new uniform, which pupils helped design. As a result, all pupils, boys and girls, now feel part of and integrated into the school.

Although challenges remain, you are aware of them and tackle them methodically and with a clear focus on raising pupils' achievement. You acknowledge that standards have declined during the schools' transition period. You have effectively managed pupils', parents' and carers' and the community's negative reactions to the boys' school closing. However, you have now formulated focused and effective action plans to improve the quality of teaching, behaviour and pupils' outcomes in all years. These plans are a work in progress and some improvements are evident, especially the improving behaviour of pupils. Nevertheless, it is too early to see the impact your actions are having on raising pupils' achievements.

You correctly identify that outcomes in 2018 are likely to show a further decline. This is because boys' achievement, which is lower than that of the girls, is now being reported in the school's overall headline measures. You have rightly judged the attainment and progress made by boys and girls over time, to determine the differing gender starting points, so that boys' and girls' progress can be evaluated. The information gained from assessments will identify what is working well and what must be improved. You have gone one step further and included the achievement of boys in last year's headline figures. At that time, the progress of boys and girls was reported separately due to both schools operating as individual schools, albeit on the same school site. This action allowed you to benchmark the school's overall progress measures and provided you and your leaders with a starting point from which to now improve the school.

During the transition time of closing the boys' school and boys joining your school, you and your staff ran two simultaneous curricula. You made this decision to ensure that boys would settle more easily and be able to continue with their chosen subjects while at their new school. Difficulties in staffing and the resulting higher proportion of teaching done by non-specialist staff resulted in the quality of teaching deteriorating. Results for 2017 show poor outcomes both for boys and girls in these subjects. You and your leaders are no longer providing two different curricula for boys and girls. A new curriculum has been introduced and you are ensuring that careers advice and guidance are now used effectively to help guide pupils to make sound decisions regarding subject options and hence prepare them well for their next steps in education. It is too soon to gauge the impact of the improved curriculum on pupils' outcomes.

Pastoral care remains a strength of the school. Staff know pupils well, and pupils trust their teachers. Relationships are respectful throughout the school. You have a team of committed teachers and other adults who care deeply about and are proud to belong to the school.

Pupils generally have positive attitudes to learning. Most behave well and are keen

to be successful. They are polite, courteous and show respect to each other, to adults and for the school's buildings and facilities. However, when learning is not matched to pupils' specific needs or does not take account of what they already know, understand and can do, individuals can become distracted and display off-task behaviour. This is particularly evident in Years 7 and 8.

There are pockets of very high-quality teaching especially in English and in the sixth form. Where teaching is effective, it is because learning activities are matched well to pupils' needs and abilities. Highly effective questioning allows pupils to think deeply about challenging concepts. As a result, pupils work hard and produce work of high quality. Leaders have not yet taken full advantage of the strong teaching practices that exist in the school to drive further improvements in teaching and learning, particularly where teaching is not good enough.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all staff are well aware of their primary responsibility to keep pupils safe. There is a strong safeguarding culture across the school. Staff have regular and focused child protection and 'Prevent' duty training so that they are aware of safeguarding issues, including local and new priorities, for example online safety. Consequently, staff fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities effectively. They are confident to refer any concerns they have about pupils. Leaders deal with referrals appropriately, drawing on external agencies when the need arises.

Above all, pupils reported that they feel safe and staff and parents agree. Pupils told inspectors that bullying is rare and that they are free from harassment. They expressed confidence that staff would deal effectively with any bullying, or other problems, they might experience. Pupils are very complimentary about the pastoral support that they receive when they need it.

Inspection findings

- The inspection's first focus area was the quality of teaching, especially in mathematics. The previous inspection report identified that attainment and progress were not high enough in November 2014. Mathematics achievements remain too low. For example, GCSE outcomes were weak in this subject in both 2016 and 2017. Several mathematics teachers left in recent times, and leaders struggled to recruit permanent, high-quality staff to replace them. A succession of temporary and/or non-specialist teachers taught many pupils, and this had a detrimental effect on their progress. With the help of targeted and focused training, the quality of teaching in mathematics is beginning to improve. The school has successfully recruited permanent, specialist mathematics teachers. The mathematics department is currently almost fully staffed and it is poised to be fully staffed from September 2018. However, most pupils spoken to during the time of the inspection continue to have negative attitudes towards this subject and do not enjoy their mathematics lessons. This is because of the weaker historic teaching. Work in mathematics is not consistently matched to pupils' specific needs and different starting points, resulting in work that is either

too easy or difficult for pupils to complete. When this happens, some individuals become disengaged and display off-task behaviour. Leaders are aware of this and have detailed plans in place to tackle this issue. It is too soon to see the impact of these actions on pupils' attitudes or improved outcomes.

- The second focus was the effectiveness of the school's curriculum to improve the progress of disadvantaged and the most able pupils. These groups of pupils have underachieved considerably in recent years. Current assessment information shows that, while disadvantaged and the most able pupils' progress is improving, they are not attaining the standards and making the progress of which they are capable. Leaders have suitably evaluated the school's curriculum and now ensure that pupils are on the right courses in key stage 4. This work has recently been completed. However, it is too early to see the impact of this work on raising pupils' achievements. Currently, not enough teaching across the curriculum takes full account of what pupils already know and can do. As a result, pupils, especially the most able, complete more of the same work rather than work that stretches and challenges their thinking. Disadvantaged pupils are too often not given the support and help that they need to tackle more difficult concepts. As a result, too many become easily distracted, do not complete the work set and engage in off-task behaviour, which slows their progress. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and or disabilities are well supported, both in lessons and outside of lessons. As a result, pupils are able to access the learning and consequently make good progress. Leaders are aware of the remaining shortcomings and have plans in place to complete more focused staff training to improve the match of work to pupils' capabilities.
- Sixth-form provision and its impact were looked at. Strengths in the sixth form have been maintained. The leadership of this area is strong, and leaders have a clear vision for this aspect of the school's work. An aspirational culture with a strong sense of focus on students' achievement is clearly evident. Leaders carefully and efficiently monitor and track students' achievements and their physical well-being, so that any interventions can quickly be put in place when needed. Students feel valued and well cared for and are effectively supported. They are highly complimentary about the quality of teaching, pastoral and mental well-being support afforded to them by all staff. One student commented that the 'sixth form feels like a family'. They are confident, eloquent and extremely proud of their school. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is underpinned by high expectations and aspirations, supported by high-quality careers advice and guidance. Consequently, outcomes in the sixth form are strong. The curriculum is carefully planned to meet students' needs, and appropriate plans are in place to broaden the curriculum offer further, including level 2 qualifications, to ensure that more students have the opportunity to experience sixth-form life. All students complete work experience placements, which are carefully chosen to compliment students' career and subject choices. Almost all students who left the school at the end of their courses went on to higher education, employment or apprenticeships.
- Governors are a dedicated group of professionals who care deeply about the school. They have provided suitable support and guidance during the school's recent changes and have appropriately challenged school leaders to further

improve teaching and pupils' outcomes. Governors understand the school's strengths and weaknesses well and have a clear drive to bring about the necessary improvements to rectify weaknesses in provision and outcomes. They have a vision for the school, which includes West Coventry Academy being the school of choice for all parents in the community. Governors know well the challenges the school faced and is continuing to face but are clear that the plans that they have in place must be implemented effectively if the quality of education is to improve quickly. They are clearly focused on pupils' achievements and offer effective challenge to school leaders when they feel that issues need addressing.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- school improvement strategies are embedded fully and evaluated regularly for their impact on pupils' outcomes
- teachers set work that takes account of pupils' needs and what pupils already know and can do, especially the most able and disadvantaged pupils, so that a greater proportion of them makes good or better progress
- strong practices that exist within the school are shared among staff to ensure that inconsistencies in teaching are eliminated and pupils make rapid progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Bianka Zemke
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, members of your senior leadership team, three governors including the chair and vice chair and both formally and informally with pupils and sixth formers. We visited several classes with senior leaders, during which we evaluated teaching and learning and spoke with pupils about their work. We scrutinised several documents including your self-evaluation, safeguarding and child protection records, external review documents and achievement information. Parents' views were considered through the 58 responses to Parent View, including the 57 free text comments. We also considered 61 responses from staff and 107 responses from pupils to their respective online inspection questionnaires.