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17 October 2018

Mr Gary Kibble
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Kibble

Short inspection of Batley Grammar School

Following my visit to the school on 26 September 2018 with Cathy Morgan and Barbara O'Brien, 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 January 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

Your leadership continues to galvanise school leaders, teachers and staff. Having been effective as head of school, you have a proven capacity to lead the school forward. Inspectors have confidence in your ability to improve the quality of provision on offer and the outcomes that pupils achieve as you move into your new role as substantive headteacher.

You bring a keen eye to school leadership. You have ensured that systems and structures at the school are clear and fit for purpose. Everyone knows what they should be doing and why. No stone is left unturned in the way that you assess what is going well at school and what needs to improve. As a result of these accurate and comprehensive self-evaluation processes, improvement planning is precise and associated actions sensible. You track the progress that pupils are making, and the standards that they are reaching, effectively. This allows subject leaders to intervene when individual pupils are not making as much progress as they could. Previously, for example, you noted that some of your most-able pupils were coasting. The strategies that you put in place ensured that this is no longer the case. This is an example of the capacity that you and your team have to make the school even better for the pupils in your care.

Staff are proud of their school and happy to work for you. They appreciate the

programmes of professional development that you put in place for them. You invest time, energy and resources in developing teachers' leadership skills. As a result, your middle leaders are highly ambitious for their pupils. There is a real thirst for school improvement among many of these colleagues. In addition, governors support the school well. They are very committed and able. They are well led, and they care deeply for the school and its pupils. Governors take their responsibilities very seriously and are a force for good at your school.

Teaching is characterised by a tight lesson planning structure developed to support all staff to engage pupils in learning. What is more, the structure still allows teachers to be creative when planning, in order to spark the interest of their classes. The increasingly effective use of 'personal learning checklists' helps to focus staff on exactly what knowledge and which skills that individual pupils need to develop further. Pupils' behaviour in class is often exemplary. Pupils are committed to learning, they are respectful in classrooms and they try their best. Your use of 'progress cards' helps individual pupils to know exactly where they are in their learning and where they need to try even harder. Where learning is strongest, teachers use questioning very effectively to push pupils' understanding on.

Typically, pupils feel cared for and included in school life. They have friends from different cultural heritages and religious backgrounds. Pupils understand, respect and celebrate difference. They are engaged in their learning and try their best. Your school is a calm place to be, and a happy place to learn. It is a place where pupils can indeed 'believe, grow and succeed', as your strapline and mnemonic suggest.

You, together with your school leaders, have been successful in addressing areas for improvement highlighted in the previous inspection. Provision in early years is now much stronger. An increasingly high proportion of children make good progress and leave Reception 'ready to fly' in Year 1. Your director of primary has successfully spearheaded improvements in early years. In addition, since the time of the last inspection, the decision was made to close the sixth form. The sixth form was an area for improvement cited in the previous inspection report.

You and your team want your pupils to experience the very best educational experiences. You want to ensure that all areas of school life are strong. As such, you are aware that the quality of teaching in the primary phase is too variable, particularly in writing. You also know that the rates of progress that pupils in the secondary phase are making in mathematics are slower than those in other subjects. Plans are already in place to develop these areas of the school.

The executive principal is giving you effective support as headteacher, and offering sensible guidance as your predecessor. Her role is now focused on the development of governance, and she is focused on the development of a multi-academy trust model in the local area. Her skills are being used well to this end.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and other school leaders, including governors, have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The executive principal ensures that statutory checks on staff are undertaken. Her management of the single central record, used to log these checks, is exemplary. Safeguarding training is recorded and monitored effectively to ensure that all staff have up-to-date information and a secure knowledge and understanding of how to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

Safeguarding is more than a paper exercise at your school. Pupils behave well at school and are courteous and polite. They treat each other with respect. Pupils say that there is little bullying. If anyone uses unkind words or acts disrespectfully towards someone, most pupils have confidence that members of staff will help to sort the situation out.

You ensure that pupils who are more vulnerable receive the support that they need. You are tenacious in dealing with outside agencies when this support is not forthcoming or is not timely enough. You have recently appointed a 'student manager', who has added capacity to the pastoral systems at school. Pupils understand the importance of attending school. Few are persistently absent.

Pupils understand what it is to be a citizen in modern Britain and understand the values of tolerance, democracy and respect. Pupils say that differences are celebrated. For example, in religious studies an inspector observed a teacher skilfully guiding the class through the differences between commitment ceremonies or their equivalent in the Abrahamic religions. The learning that was observed touched on a variety of cultural and religious traditions with sensitivity and respect. Pupils learned from each other's faiths in a calm and thoughtful way. Pupils say that this attitude is not only typical at school but assumed.

School policies, staff training, the respectful school community, and curriculum coverage all help to ensure that pupils are safe at school.

Inspection findings

- Provision in the early years has improved since the last inspection. Your director of primary has ensured that the quality of teaching is now strong in this key stage. Teachers use their knowledge of the children in their care to plan activities that stimulate their interest and push them forward in their learning. Teachers have high expectations and use questioning increasingly effectively to help children both understand and make them think more deeply. There are well-established protocols in classrooms and in outside learning spaces which are understood by the children. Many children show mature attitudes for their age. The standards that children reach by the end of Reception are rising, and most are well prepared for their transition into Year 1.
- The quality of teaching in the primary phase is variable. It is very strong in Years 5 and 6. You and other school leaders have effective programmes of professional development in place for teachers at all stages of their career. This, in addition to

systematic monitoring procedures to check the quality of teaching, helps you to identify any training needs of your teachers. You then provide appropriate support effectively. As a result, the profile of teaching in the primary phase is continuing to improve.

- You are aware that the teaching of writing in the primary phase needs to strengthen. Currently, too large a proportion of the development of pupils' writing skills in the primary phase falls on the shoulders of teachers in Years 5 and 6. You, together with your director of primary, have already considered how to improve this situation, and your development plan already outlines the plans that you have.
- Your teachers provide well for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Some pupils in the primary phase who spoke with inspectors were very happy with adaptations that were made for them to help them access the curriculum.
- As part of the inspection, I wanted to consider how effectively you and other school leaders use additional funding that comes into school. In 2017, the progress that disadvantaged pupils made at school was strong, indicating that pupil premium funding had a positive impact on the progress that pupils made. The standards that they reached compared favourably with other non-disadvantaged pupils nationally. This shows that your focus on excellence in teaching, together with other additional support given to these pupils, was effective. You are keeping your eye on the performance of disadvantaged pupils currently at school, as you noted that this group's performance was not quite as strong in external tests in 2018 as in the previous year. An example of this additional focus is the recent appointment of a link governor to challenge you on the way that this money is being used. Inspection evidence shows that disadvantaged pupils currently at the school are making gains in their learning and progressing well.
- The additional finance that the school receives to develop pupils' engagement in sport and physical activities in the primary phase is used effectively. Pupils have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of activities, including 'bikeability' and 'balanceability'. The development of swimming skills has a high priority. In addition, any additional funding received for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is also used effectively to ensure that these pupils access the curriculum and make good progress in their learning.
- I also wanted to check that the curriculum that you offer at key stage 2 and key stage 3 gives pupils access to a wide range of subjects and experiences. A variety of subject areas were observed during the inspection, and inspectors looked at work from different subjects and different year groups. We also spoke to middle leaders with responsibility for different subject areas. Pupils at your school enjoy a wide range of subjects and are developing their skills well across the curriculum. In Year 9, pupils are now able to choose two creative arts subjects out of four. For example, they have access to food technology, drama, music and art. The impact of this new system has been a step change in the number of pupils opting for these subjects at GCSE. Many more pupils now study arts subjects. Your director of primary has plans in place to further develop the curriculum and assessment

systems for subjects other than English, mathematics and science in the primary phase in order to support your work in the secondary phase.

- My final area of focus was around the rates of progress that pupils are making in the secondary phase, and whether this is continuing to improve. Unvalidated data for 2018 confirms direct observation during the inspection. The progress that pupils make in the secondary phase continues to improve. You and your team now have a proven capacity in this area. In the past, you had concerns about the progress that the most able pupils were making. You made this a focus at school, and teachers now routinely use 'stretch activities' to help push these pupils forward in their learning by making them 'think hard'. This, together with other strategies, has led to an increase in the progress of the most able pupils.
- You are aware that the progress that pupils make in mathematics, and the standards that they reach in this subject, lag behind that of other subjects in the secondary phase. You have altered the faculty structure to bolster the leadership of mathematics and have strengthened staffing in this area. This is beginning to bear fruit, but you are aware that there is work still to be done to improve the quality of provision in mathematics. The quality of teaching in this subject is too variable, and in a similar way to the teaching of writing in the primary phase, too much weight is currently placed on the shoulders of the Year 11 teaching team to help pupils to catch-up. You have sensible plans in place to continue to improve the teaching of mathematics in the secondary phase.
- Although not a focus for this inspection, I note the high quality of English teaching in the secondary phase. The design of the English curriculum and assessment procedures are impressive. The quality of questioning seen during the inspection was stunning, and the progress that pupils make in English is excellent.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the consistency in the quality of teaching improves, and that the teaching of writing in the primary phase continues to improve
- the rates of progress that pupils make, and the standards that they reach, in mathematics in the secondary phase further improve.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Wardle
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, the executive principal, the director of primary phase, your assistant headteachers and raising standards leaders. I spoke with four members of the governing body at school, including the chair. I also spoke with a member of the governing body on the telephone. We met with middle leaders from both the primary and secondary phases, including those responsible for early years. An inspector held a meeting with colleagues responsible for monitoring the impact of the pupil premium funding. Another inspector talked to those with responsibility for safeguarding.

Inspectors spoke to parents at the beginning of the day, and we spoke with three groups of pupils formally, and talked to others across the course of the inspection. We observed teaching and learning with members of the senior team, and reviewed pupils' work from different year groups and from a variety of subjects, including that from children in early years. An inspector listened to some pupils read. You presented the school development plan, the school's self-evaluation document and information detailing pupils' progress and attainment. A variety of other documents were considered, including those relating to safeguarding and policies on the school's website.

I considered the 45 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 13 responses to the pupils' questionnaire. I also took into account parent surveys conducted by the school.