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Anne-Marie Blewitt
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Dear Anne-Marie Blewitt

Short inspection of Ivanhoe College Ashby-De-La-Zouch

Following my visit to the school on 4 October 2018 with Ian Colling HMI, 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You provide strong and confident leadership, together with a clear sense of direction. You are supported effectively by the head of school and senior leaders. This has enabled you to recently take up the temporary position of executive principal for Ivanhoe College and Ibstock College. Your vision statement describes the school on a 'journey to excellence' and pupils and staff agree the school continues to improve. They are proud to work at the school.

You and your team are ambitious, promoting high expectations for the school community. When issues arise, you are swift to tackle them. Leaders have recently revised the school's behaviour policy and procedures and introduced the 'Ivanhoe Way', which reinforces these expectations. Pupils told inspectors that this has helped improve pupils' behaviour as teachers are more consistent in the way they deal with any poor behaviour. Inspectors found pupils to be courteous and polite. The vast majority of pupils move sensibly around the school site and behave well in lessons. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Classrooms are well ordered, and pupils are keen to take part in activities.

On the whole, parents and carers are very positive about the school, particularly the support provided by staff. As one parent who replied to Ofsted's online questionnaire said, 'The care shown for pupils is brilliant. This is a school which is setting my child up well academically, socially and emotionally.' Leaders are working hard on improving communication with parents, including the use of parent groups, technology and social media. The majority of parents confirm that the school

communicates well with them. However, through the online questionnaire, a minority of parents raised concerns about communication.

Governance is a strength of the school. Governors are skilled and well informed of their duties. They are committed to the school, have a sound understanding of issues facing the school, and challenge and support leaders effectively.

The previous inspection's recommendations challenged you to build on the strengths of teaching, specifically the use of questioning and helping pupils to know how to improve their work. Leaders are effective in supporting teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning through focused professional development. Talented middle leaders are helping to develop consistency in practice and much has improved. Pupils use the feedback their teachers give them to improve their work and they respond well to the support they receive.

You were also tasked with using the pupil premium funding to improve the rates of progress for disadvantaged pupils, who have typically made less progress than others with similar starting points. You have appropriately identified this as an ongoing priority and are tackling some of the barriers to achievement. However, for too many disadvantaged pupils, their low attendance, along with a high number of exclusions, is limiting their progress. Leaders do not evaluate this aspect of their work carefully enough and therefore do not know which strategies are having the most impact.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that there is an effective culture of safeguarding. Appropriate checks are made on the suitability of adults to work with pupils. Leaders meet regularly to make sure that pupils who are vulnerable are well supported. The designated safeguarding lead is meticulous in ensuring that all staff, including governors and those new to the school, are fully trained in their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. A recent example of this is training on 'county lines' provided by the police. As a result, staff are aware of what they should do if they have a safeguarding concern of any kind. Leaders are aware of issues within the local community and work closely with external agencies.

All pupils we spoke to say that they feel safe in school. They know which staff to approach if they have an issue or a concern and they are confident that they will be helped to resolve it. Pupils say that if they have any concerns about bullying, matters are resolved quickly and successfully. Staff agree that the school is safe and that any instances of bullying are dealt with promptly and effectively.

Inspection findings

- You and your leaders have a clear focus on ensuring that teaching is the best it can be. You expect strong leadership in subject departments and monitor this effectively. Pupils benefit from effective teaching and they make good progress in most subjects. The majority of pupils are achieving the ambitious target grades leaders have set for them.
- Inspectors looked at the progress of your most-able pupils. Teachers use a variety of ways to challenge pupils' thinking. Skilful questioning is used to clarify their understanding and address any misconceptions they may have. Work in pupils' books shows they are given many opportunities to explore ideas in depth. Subject leaders have worked with other schools in the area to develop a curriculum that is helping to prepare pupils for the demands of the new GCSE; an example of this is the use of challenging texts in English. Therefore, the majority of the most able pupils make very good progress during their time in the school.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not do as well as other pupils. Leaders have a clear plan to spend the extra funding the school receives. You ensure that staff monitor these pupils' progress very carefully, and provide swift support which prevents individuals from falling behind. You have brought in a range of approaches, such as mentoring and music initiatives. As a result, the longer the pupils are at Ivanhoe the better their progress is. However, these pupils, and in particular the most able disadvantaged, do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders are not evaluating the impact of the plan sufficiently and as a result do not know which strategies are working the most effectively.
- You use Year 7 catch-up funding to provide mathematics and English learning mentors, among other strategies and resources, to help pupils who are not 'secondary ready' to catch up with their peers. Most of these pupils catch up and are now on their appropriate pathway. For the small handful of pupils who do not catch up, you continue with specialist support in Year 8.
- Next, we looked at the attendance of vulnerable pupils, the disadvantaged and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. Overall, school attendance is above the national average and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is at the national average, but absence rates are higher for vulnerable pupils. This is partly because the poor attendance of a small number of young people who have complex medical and emotional needs has a disproportionate impact on the attendance of the group. It remains the case that too many disadvantaged pupils are absent from school too frequently and not able to benefit from the extra provision. They are not able to make the progress needed to attain outcomes that reflect their potential.
- Finally, we looked at exclusions of disadvantaged pupils in the school. Ivanhoe is an inclusive school, and you and your student support team work hard to meet the needs of the pupils. As a result, you have not needed to permanently exclude any pupil from school for many years. In 2016-17, the proportion of fixed-term exclusions was also below the national average, but disadvantaged pupils, particularly boys, were disproportionately excluded. Your records show that the numbers of exclusions of disadvantaged pupils has reduced but is still stubbornly high. Supported by your governors, you have very recently introduced more targeted provision, for example the employment of a 'behaviour education access' worker. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact of this on reducing the numbers even

further.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- carry out a detailed evaluation of the impact of the pupil premium funding and use the results to ascertain the most effective ways to:
 - raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils, particularly the most able
 - improve the attendance of those disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent
 - reduce the proportion of fixed-term exclusions of disadvantaged pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Vasey
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, we discussed the work of the school with you, your head of school and other leaders. We held a meeting with subject leaders. We met with a group of pupils from different year groups and we spoke informally with pupils around the school. We had a conversation with the consultant supporting the school and met with five governors, including the chair of governors. We took into account school documentation, assessment information, policies and information posted on the school's website. We completed 15 visits to classes and looked at pupils' work. We considered 109 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View. We also reviewed the 57 responses to the staff survey. We considered information relating to safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and bullying.