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Miss Amanda Caton
Interim Headteacher
The Woodlands Academy
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Dear Miss Caton

Short inspection of The Woodlands Academy

Following my visit to the school on 10 October 2018 with Tracy Millard, 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 February 2015.

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.**

Since your appointment as interim headteacher, you have moved the school forward with purpose. You focus on the needs of the pupils and of the school. You have put improvement measures into place, particularly in the areas of accreditation, curriculum and well-being. While it is too soon to see the full impact of these measures, you have put the foundations in place to support improving pupils' outcomes.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They talk about the positive changes that you have brought about, particularly in relation to teaching teams and newly developed tracking documentation – personal learning journals. Staff feel appreciated. They acknowledge how the changes you have implemented have had a positive effect on their workload and well-being.

There have been significant changes to the governing body within the last year. Governors are now beginning to ask challenging questions and make key decisions regarding the senior leadership of the school. Since September, the new chair of governors has taken effective action to enable the board to function more successfully. Focused learning walks with leaders support informed challenge on a range of key areas, for example marking. Governors are ambitious for the pupils of the school and focused on raising aspirations and ensuring that the school is providing high-quality outcomes for them.

There has been an increase in the number of pupils referred to the school. The school now admits more pupils with complex social, emotional and mental health needs. You have responded to these changes through physical amendments to the internal room structure of the school. These ensure that all pupils have a space suitable to their specific need. Plans have also been developed for a senior leadership restructure and further staff training to strengthen expertise in this area.

Pupils are now assessed on entry using a variety of methods suitable to each pupil's individual needs. An ongoing assessment framework is in place to ensure tracking of pupils' information throughout the year. A monitoring and evaluation procedure is in place to closely monitor teaching and learning across all phases of the school. These systems are not yet embedded throughout the school, and leaders acknowledge that there are further changes to be made to ensure that all progress is captured.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The required checks are made on adults employed to work with children. Staff receive regular and effective training and are up to date with current legislation. They are clear and confident on procedures they must follow if they have any concerns. You have created a safeguarding culture where all staff recognise their responsibility to keep children safe.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They talk confidently about lessons learned regarding online bullying. Pupils can identify their trusted adult and also know that they can talk to a number of other adults in school if they need to. They are also clear about the acceptance of others, following a discussion about the book 'The Boy in the Dress'. One pupil said, 'We accept everyone for who they are.'

The school works well with other agencies, including two local authorities. Records show a thorough recording of safeguarding concerns. Any concerns are dealt with effectively and are followed up to ensure a positive outcome.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, inspectors focused on whether teaching had remained good and supported good progress for all pupils. The curriculum plan is newly developed and, as such, is not fully embedded in all areas of the school. In semi-formal learning, individualised personal targets are clear for the nurture and personal growth for pupils. These high expectations are not consistently replicated in the academic targets and activities used to teach all pupils.
- Teachers do not consistently demonstrate high expectations for pupils. This variation means that pupils are not always challenged in their lessons. Some teachers do not use assessment information accurately and are, therefore, not consistent in planning learning that meets the needs of all pupils.
- Pupils are sometimes encouraged to work independently; however, opportunities for this are inconsistent. The high level of one-to-one support and small-group work makes this difficult.

- Targets set for pupils, particularly higher-ability learners, do not always reflect the work completed in pupils' books. Higher-ability pupils are demonstrating writing at length, complex sentences and correct punctuation. The targets identified are sometimes set lower than the current work completed. As a result, they are not providing stretch or challenge in specific areas of learning.
- Senior leaders have introduced a range of new qualifications for this academic year, which include, for the first time, literacy and numeracy. This has begun to raise the aspirations for key stage 4 pupils.
- The spending of pupil premium and other additional funding is well documented and its impact is diligently evaluated. The money is utilised to support individual and group activities which increase personal development and enable pupils to access learning. Good progress from identified starting points is evident for this group of pupils, particularly in reading.
- A further focus of our visit was transition into the school and the post-16 transition into adulthood. Pupils move smoothly into, and through, the school. Individual transition plans are highly regarded by parents, who feel fully supported by staff.
- All pupils leaving Year 11, at the end of the last academic year, went on to further education. Ten pupils went to a specialist post-16 provision and one pupil entered mainstream college.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers challenge pupils further in their learning, particularly in core subjects, by using progress information accurately
- teaching becomes more consistent across all classes by fully embedding the initiatives recently introduced
- leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and learning are focused on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress over time
- the proposed new management of the school implements the changes that have been identified, ensuring that this supports the school's capacity to continue to improve.

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

Yours sincerely

Tricia Stevens
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we carried out a range of activities to gather information on the key lines of enquiry. Inspectors met with you, senior and middle leaders. The pastoral manager and senior leaders accompanied inspectors during learning walks and during break and lunchtime. Meetings were also held with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, four parents and a group of pupils.

Responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, staff and pupil surveys were considered. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, minutes from the governing body, pupils' progress data, attendance data, behaviour, exclusion and incident logs and the single central register.