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Mrs Anne Bonney
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Bonney

Short inspection of West Craven High School

Following my visit to the school on 10 October 2018 with Phil Hyman, 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 October 2013.

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.**

You and other senior leaders, including those of the Pendle Education Trust, who took responsibility for the school in September 2016, have a precise understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. You took up the post of headteacher in September 2017, with a clear understanding of the challenges that the school faced. There had been a sharp decline in the standard of education provided after the last inspection. Pupils' examination results had dipped significantly and too many pupils were not attaining the grades of which they were capable. The actions that you and other leaders have taken have been effective in placing the school on an upward trajectory.

You and senior leaders provide a clear message to staff and other members of the school community: that pupils get one chance at having a good education and it is your responsibility and that of your staff to provide this. Staff are expected to maintain high professional standards, and to challenge pupils to learn with more depth and at a higher level than was typically the case previously. In setting, supporting and monitoring these standards, you have been effective in improving teaching and pupils' progress.

There is further work to be done, however, to ensure that pupils' education is

consistently at the standard you expect. Despite recent improvements, the quality of teaching remains variable across a range of subjects, including in Year 7 and in English. As a result, pupils' progress is also varied. Typically, girls' progress is in line with that of other pupils nationally. However, despite recent improvements, boys do not consistently make the progress of which they are capable. Current disadvantaged pupils make better progress than was the case previously, but their outcomes are not in line with others nationally who have similar starting points.

The pupils with whom we spoke were generally positive about the school, especially those who had joined the school since it became part of the Pendle Education Trust. This view was shared by some of those parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. This was especially the case for parents with children in key stage 3. Other pupils and parents had a more mixed view. Many described an improving picture, but they also raised concerns. They referred to turbulence in the school's leadership and the previously poor quality of teaching as factors contributing to their misgivings about the school.

Pupils and parents described pupils' conduct and attitudes to learning as improving, but variable. The pupils with whom inspectors spoke said that poor behaviour is challenged more consistently and effectively by staff than it was previously, but that this is not always the case. Records kept by senior leaders support this view. Far fewer pupils are excluded from school or placed in the school's isolation unit than was previously the case. Pupils' attendance is broadly in line with the national average. Inspectors found pupils to be courteous, friendly and generally keen to learn.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Safeguarding records, including checks on employees' suitability to work with children, are complete. Inspectors checked referrals and found that they are followed up and recorded effectively. Staff are routinely updated about safeguarding issues, including by external agencies, and this supports the effective culture of safeguarding.

The pupils with whom we spoke said that they feel safe at the school. They are taught how to keep themselves safe from potential dangers that can arise when using the internet. Inspectors checked that systems to support the safety and well-being of pupils who are absent from school are effective. Leaders manage effectively the safety of the small number of pupils who attend alternative provision.

Inspection findings

- The first area that we considered was whether school leaders manage the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding effectively. You agreed with our evaluation that, after the last inspection, there was a period when school leaders, including governors, had not managed these aspects effectively. As a result, there was a drop in rates of attendance for too many disadvantaged pupils. These pupils' persistent absence contributed to disadvantaged pupils' weak academic progress at that time.

- You and other senior leaders, including recently appointed governors and trust leaders, have acted swiftly and effectively to improve the attendance of current disadvantaged pupils. Fewer disadvantaged pupils are persistently absent and the overall attendance of these pupils is increasing. You recognise that, despite these improvements, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils does not match that of others nationally. As a result, you routinely and effectively monitor, evaluate and refine the actions that you take in order to accelerate the current upward trend.
- You have a similarly sharp focus on improving disadvantaged pupils' progress. In your time at the school, you and other senior leaders have introduced systems that monitor these pupils' outcomes more accurately and routinely than before. Teachers' increased awareness of their responsibility to secure good progress for disadvantaged pupils has led to more effective learning than previously in some areas. However, despite these improvements, disadvantaged pupils' progress varies.
- The support that staff provide for Year 7 pupils who join the school with low starting points in literacy and mathematics is more effective than previously in helping them to catch up with their peers. For the first time in recent years school leaders have a coherent plan of actions to support these pupils. You monitor pupils' progress and plan their next steps systematically. However, because of variability in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Year 7, some pupils are slow to attain the levels that are required.
- The second area that we looked at was whether teachers routinely set pupils, especially boys, work which matches their needs. We found that this was an aspect that you and other senior leaders have a sharp focus on. You explained that before your arrival, too many pupils across a range of subjects and key stages were set work that did not stretch their thinking. Often, this was because they were taught by staff who lacked the subject knowledge to explore topics and secure learning in enough depth and detail. As a result, pupils did not make the progress of which they were capable. Boys have been especially vulnerable to low expectations and weaker teaching, particularly in English.
- Inspectors found that you and other leaders are taking effective action to secure the improvements required. Most teachers now have good subject knowledge. More of them, and more frequently, use assessment information to set work which challenges pupils to think and respond at the level of which they are capable. As a result, pupils are now making better progress and those in key stage 4 are provided with opportunities to fill gaps in learning from previous years. However, despite improvements, variability remains. You are aware of those teachers who do not set pupils work that stretches and challenges them. In Year 7, teachers do not routinely use the results of tests taken at the end of primary school effectively to understand what pupils already know, understand and can do. Boys are making better progress than previously across a range of subjects, but some do not make the progress of which they are capable, including in English.
- Our third focus area was to establish whether leaders secure pupils' good conduct and attitudes to learning, including for those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. In previous years, pupils who had

SEN and/or disabilities were especially vulnerable to exclusion from school, including too many cases of repeat exclusions. This is no longer the case. The staff who support these pupils do so effectively.

- We found that, overall, the actions taken by current senior leaders to encourage pupils' good conduct and attitudes to learning are effective. Key stage 4 pupils and their parents have mixed views on pupils' conduct, although they generally agree that it has improved recently. Pupils in key stage 3 are typically positive about behaviour around school and in most lessons. Inspectors found that where pupils are not set work at the correct level or teachers' expectations of pupils are too low, pupils can lose concentration. As a result, these pupils sometimes misbehave.
- The final area that we considered was whether leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses along with the capacity to tackle the improvements needed. We found that you and other senior leaders, including governors and senior leaders of the Pendle Education Trust, have a sharp understanding of the school's current position and priorities. You have high expectations of all staff, including school leaders, and for pupils. This has provided the basis for the actions that you have taken since becoming headteacher. These actions have stemmed the school's decline following the last inspection and have placed it on an upward trajectory. This demonstrates that you have the capacity to build upon the improvements already made and support pupils in consistently making the progress of which they are capable.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the attendance and progress of disadvantaged pupils continue to improve, so that they match those of other pupils nationally
- assessment information, including results from the national tests that pupils take at the end of primary school, is used effectively by teachers to plan work that stretches and challenges pupils
- boys consistently make the progress of which they are capable, particularly in English
- pupils' conduct and attitudes to learning continue to improve, so that they consistently meet the high expectations of senior leaders.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Ruddy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Meetings were held with you, other school leaders, the chief executive officer of the Pendle Education Trust and governors. Inspectors spoke with pupils throughout the inspection to gather their views on a variety of issues, including safeguarding, teaching and behaviour. We examined a range of the school's documentation such as the self-evaluation, the improvement plan, assessment information, attendance and behaviour records, pupil premium funding plans and safeguarding information. We considered 40 responses to the Ofsted online parents' questionnaire, Parent View, and 23 written responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text facility. We conducted learning walks across a range of subjects and year groups. We scrutinised the work in a sample of pupils' books by undertaking a work analysis with school leaders.