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Mr Stephen Cox
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Cox

Short inspection of Ribblesdale High School

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 2019 with Sheldon Logue, Ofsted Inspector, and Ailsa Moore, 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 June 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.**

You and other leaders, including governors, have a clear vision for the school, which you describe as to provide pupils with an excellent standard of education. You and other school leaders recognise the school's current strengths and priorities for its improvement. As a result, you have put actions in place to enhance pupils' literacy, particularly that of boys and especially writing. You have also taken action to support better the most able pupils in routinely attaining the levels of which they are capable, and to improve the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) further.

Long-standing and more recently appointed leaders have had a positive impact on standards and quality in the school. For example, pupils with low starting points are now taught more effectively than was the case at the time of the previous inspection. Overall, they now make the progress of which they are capable. In mathematics, an area where leadership and pupils' progress have previously been weaker than your expectation of them, you have brought about improvement. You have worked effectively with representatives of the local authority to increase governors' skills, enabling them to fulfil their duties effectively.

The school is popular and well regarded in the community. The overwhelming

majority of the 612 parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire were positive about the school, as were the pupils with whom we spoke. Year 7 pupils said that their transition to secondary school has been managed well. They like their new school. Pupils are also positive about the range and quality of extra-curricular opportunities provided.

We were impressed by pupils' courtesy and confidence. Pupils typically try hard in class and present their work carefully. They enjoy good relationships with one another and adults. The school is a happy and positive environment, where pupils care about themselves and others. Pupils say that they are known well, valued and cared for by staff. They confirmed that this is a school where equality and inclusion are deep rooted.

Overall, pupils' behaviour and attendance are well managed. For example, few current pupils are excluded. Pupils' attendance is broadly in line with national averages, although, despite improvement, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils does not match that of others nationally.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. School leaders are vigilant when ensuring that safeguarding records, including checks on employees' suitability to work with children, are complete. Inspectors checked safeguarding referrals. They are followed up and recorded effectively. Staff are routinely updated about safeguarding issues, including how to spot signs of drug misuse, radicalisation and child sexual exploitation.

Pupils feel safe at the school. They say that bullying is rare and that any cases of bullying that they report are dealt with effectively. Staff teach and remind pupils how to keep themselves safe from potential dangers that can arise when using the internet.

Inspectors found 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 funding effectively. Disadvantaged pupils have been more likely than others to miss lessons due to absence in recent years and also to be persistently absent. This, alongside other factors, has had a negative impact on their progress. In 2018 the examination results of disadvantaged pupils were a grade lower than others with similar starting points nationally.
- You and other senior leaders, including governors, have made the good progress of disadvantaged pupils a key priority for improvement. You commissioned an independent review of the effectiveness of the pupil premium funding in 2018. The review's findings have shaped the plans and actions which are currently

being implemented. As a result, there is a sharpened focus on ensuring that these pupils are taught effectively. Teachers' increased awareness of their responsibility to make sure that disadvantaged pupils make good progress has led to more effective learning than previously in some areas, such as mathematics in the current Year 11. It is too early to see the impact of these recently introduced strategies. As a result, the current progress of disadvantaged pupils varies within and across subjects.

- You have taken action to improve the attendance and behaviour of disadvantaged pupils. In previous years, these pupils were more likely to be absent from school or be excluded than others. Inspectors found that pupils' conduct around the school and in lessons is typically positive. This is also the case for disadvantaged pupils. As a result, fewer of these pupils are excluded from school. They are supported effectively in this aspect. The actions that you have put in place to improve disadvantaged pupils' attendance is, in some cases, effective. However, despite this, currently the overall attendance of disadvantaged pupils does not match that of others nationally and too many disadvantaged pupils are persistently absent.
- Our second focus area was to establish whether leaders effectively manage the education of pupils with SEND. This aspect was identified as an area for improvement at the last inspection. You have reviewed the leadership of SEND since the inspection and many improvements have been made.
- Leaders and other staff know pupils with SEND well. They are especially effective in understanding and supporting the pastoral needs of these pupils. Previously, pupils with SEND had high exclusion rates. This is no longer the case. Pupils with SEND now attend school regularly. Pupils with an education, health and care plan receive effective support. Teachers, and outside agencies and specialists when required, support them appropriately. As a result, they typically make good progress.
- An area where securing improvement has been more challenging is the academic progress of pupils with SEND support. The examination results of these pupils in 2018 were broadly a grade lower than those of others nationally with similar starting points. Leaders are focused on improving this aspect, including for those pupils with SEND with strong key stage 2 results. They have developed learning plans for each pupil, which include information for teachers to assist them in matching the work that they set to pupils' requirements. However, despite some early signs of improvement, the current impact of this strategy is mixed.
- The final area that we considered was whether leaders effectively ensure that the curriculum meets pupils' requirements. We focused on four aspects especially. These were mathematics, whether pupils make the progress of which they are capable from their starting points, boys' progress, and pupils' opportunity to study the English Baccalaureate.
- The last inspection asked you and other leaders to support teachers better in providing pupils with work to match their requirements, especially those with low starting points. You have been effective in improving the progress of these pupils. Examination results in 2018 for this group of pupils were slightly above those of others nationally with similar starting points. Work seen by inspectors

showed that these pupils typically have positive attitudes to learning. They are routinely supported and challenged effectively, across a range of subjects and year groups. As a result, they make good progress.

- The progress of pupils with high starting points is mixed. You and other leaders, including the recently appointed deputy headteacher, are focused on strengthening the consistency of this aspect. The work of these pupils shows that, where they think and respond with depth and precision, they attain the high levels of which they are capable. However, at present, the progress of the most able varies across a range of subjects, including mathematics, because they are not consistently provided with these learning opportunities.
- You and other leaders, including governors, have taken effective action to improve the leadership of mathematics. This has led to a stronger mathematics curriculum and better teaching overall. Whereas in recent years too many pupils did not make good progress, that is no longer the case because the mathematics curriculum plan meets more pupils' requirements. They are supported and challenged well. For example, many more pupils in the current Year 11 are working at the level of which they are capable than previously. However, this is not consistently the case for the most able pupils. Leaders of mathematics are making further refinements to the curriculum to support those with high starting points even more effectively.
- You are taking action to secure the good progress of boys more consistently, including in English. The focus upon strengthening senior leadership and 'quality first' teaching this year is pivotal in enabling staff to spot weaknesses in and to start to improve pupils' literacy. However, this is at an early stage and it is too early to judge the impact. Inspectors found that the pupils with whom they spoke had strong levels of oracy. They were confident and articulate. However, despite some stronger examples, the quality of pupils' writing, including extended writing, varies. This limits pupils' progress, including that of those with mid and high starting points, across a range of subjects, including in English. This is especially the case for boys. Additionally, too often pupils' misconceptions in spelling, punctuation and grammar are not successfully addressed.
- You are aware that it is the government's ambition that 75% of pupils are studying the full set of English Baccalaureate subjects by 2022. You and governors have taken effective steps to increase the proportion of current pupils who study the suite of subjects which make up the English Baccalaureate. Previously, this was limited by the small number of pupils who chose to study modern foreign languages. This is no longer the case. The leadership and teaching of modern foreign languages has been strengthened. As a result, pupils are making better progress when studying languages in key stage 3 and many more of them are choosing to follow GCSE courses in French and Spanish than was the case previously.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' literacy improves, especially that of boys, so that they write with accuracy, confidence and depth
- teachers routinely set the most able pupils work which challenges them, including in mathematics
- the progress of pupils with SEND continues to improve so that they attain the levels of which they are capable
- disadvantaged pupils' attendance and progress continue to improve towards national averages.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, 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 and governors. We also met with a representative of the local authority. 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, the pupil premium funding plans and safeguarding information. We considered 612 responses to the Ofsted online parents' questionnaire, Parent View, and 45 written responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text facility. We took account of 121 responses to the survey of pupils and 84 responses to the staff survey. 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.