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Mr David Gurney  
Executive Headteacher  
Cockburn School  
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Dear Mr Gurney

### **Short inspection of Cockburn School**

Following my visit to the school on 30 January 2019 with Michael Wardle, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Wendy Bradford, 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 September 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection will be a section 5 inspection.

You have a strong, clear vision for the school. Supported very ably by your head of school, you have created a school which is an integrated part of the community it serves and is also a community in its own right. The decisions you make each day are based on the needs of the pupils, and what is right for the community. As a result, the school is a safe place for pupils to be who they are and explore who they want to be. Governors, trustees, staff, parents and pupils are highly supportive of your leadership and know you have the best interests of the pupils at heart.

Pupils are polite and considerate to each other, visitors and staff. Pupils self-regulate their behaviour in both social areas and in lessons. The 'five Ps': to be positive, polite, prepared, punctual and have pride, are embedded in the way the school is run and pupils' behaviour. The simple and effective behaviour policies and procedures, which are understood by all and used consistently, mean the school is a harmonious and safe place to be. Pupils want to come to school, as shown by the above-average attendance rate. They want to stay in school, as shown by the very

low proportion of fixed-term exclusions.

Over the past three years pupils have made substantial and sustained progress across the curriculum. In particular, in mathematics pupils have an extremely positive learning experience. Planning is strongly focused on the pupils' needs. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. They use this highly effectively to explain mathematical concepts in ways which enable the pupils to understand their work, and tackle questions confidently both in classrooms and examinations.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Safeguarding policies and procedures are highly effective, well thought through and managed well. Pupils feel safe and are safe. Parents, staff and pupils all agreed that the school is a safe place to be. Links with outside agencies are highly effective. The on-site police officer provides a visible and effective link, in school, to the community the school serves. Action, when needed, is taken swiftly to make sure pupils receive the support they need when they need it.

A coherent team, including family support workers and early intervention therapeutic workers, means the pupils are known as individuals. Bespoke packages are put together to support pupils to stay in education and enable them to stay safe.

### **Inspection findings**

- The performing arts subjects allow pupils to develop their creative side. Pupils feel safe and able to perform and express themselves in front of their peers. The performing arts highlight strongly the very positive way in which pupils and staff work together to enhance even further pupils' progress.
- In 2018 at the end of Year 11, pupils' progress in English and humanities was lower than progress made in other subjects in the school. You have a long-term, considered plan for improving both English and humanities. For example, strong links between the English and mathematics departments support the leadership of English. The reviewed key stage 3 English curriculum develops successfully the knowledge and skills pupils need. Teaching is personalised, sophisticated language is used regularly and books show much better progress of pupils. In humanities, a review of the key stage 3 curriculum has led to a bespoke, challenging and interesting curriculum. To develop pupils' extended writing skills, there are links between the humanities area and the English department. Pupils' attitudes in humanities are incredibly positive and, as a result, progress much stronger. However, you and your staff are not complacent. You are fully aware that these successes need to be consolidated further.
- At the last inspection, you were asked to increase further the progress made by disadvantaged pupils. In 2018, at the end of Year 11, disadvantaged pupils made more progress than pupils nationally. However, they made slightly less progress than their peers in school. You, the trustees and governors considered the spending of the pupil premium money. Your well-thought-through focus is on

improving disadvantaged pupils' progress through improved teaching across the school and enabling pupils to have opportunities they otherwise would not have, such as theatre trips and trips abroad. The progress made by disadvantaged pupils is improving and is now in line with that of other pupils in the school.

- The bespoke curriculum enables pupils to make informed decisions about what they want to do next and provides them with the skills and qualifications for them to do so at the end of key stage 4. Pupils also have many opportunities in school to experience the 'real world', such as work experience and applying for positions of responsibility. Nearly every single pupil goes on to further education, employment or training at the end of Year 11. However, you are aware that the range of careers guidance is not as strong at key stage 3 as at key stage 4.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the changes made in humanities and English are consolidated fully
- the guidance provided at key stage 3 about careers and future opportunities is revised and strengthened.

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 Leeds. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tanya Stuart  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

The inspection team visited 26 lessons across the full age range of the school and across the curriculum. Many of these visits were carried out jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors met with senior leaders, members of the governing body and trustees. Pupils were spoken to, both informally at social times and formally in lessons and interviews. Pupils' work was reviewed in lessons. A range of documents was considered relating to teaching, safeguarding, pupils' performance, and governance. The school's website was also reviewed. Inspectors considered the 100 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the school's parental surveys and the 94 responses to the staff questionnaire.