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Mrs Caroline Saxelby
Executive Principal
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Dear Mrs Saxelby

Short inspection of Walton Girls' High School & Sixth Form

Following my visit to the school on 27 February 2019 with Paul Heery, 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 second short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in April 2012.

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 be a section 5 inspection.

Staff, parents and carers and the vast majority of pupils hold very positive views about the school. One parent expressed opinions shared by many others: 'The staff go above and beyond for the pupils, not because it is their job but because they genuinely care about them and their futures.' Relationships between pupils and staff are friendly and respectful. Pupils are happy and proud to be members of the school.

Through leaders' rigorous checks on the quality of teaching and on pupils' attainment and progress, you have a very detailed and precise understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. Expectations are very high across all aspects of the school's provision and you demonstrate an unwavering determination to secure the best possible outcomes for pupils, both academically and in their personal development and welfare. Staff and pupils respond positively to these high expectations and staff morale is exceptionally positive. You are mindful of staff workload, as illustrated by the impact of the school's 'well-being committee'.

Since the previous inspection you have responded with determination to rapidly improve provision within the school. Consequently, pupils have made accelerated progress across the curriculum. In 2018, pupils' overall progress by the end of key stage 4 was well above average. Strong progress was made by all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils. At the last inspection, inspectors called for leaders to further improve outcomes in mathematics. Your actions have secured strong leadership and consistently strong teaching. This has enabled pupils to make rapid progress in this subject. Furthermore, the strength of subject leadership has ensured that pupils receive consistently high-quality teaching across the curriculum. As a result, all pupils are very well prepared for their next steps in education or training and have secured appropriate placements over the past two years.

At the last inspection, inspectors challenged leaders to further improve the quality of teaching and consistently apply the school's policies. Your leadership in this area has ensured that the professional development of staff lies at the heart of school improvement. Staff have clear expectations about their performance. These expectations are underpinned by strong support and opportunities for development that appropriately meet the needs of individual staff. The school's open culture enables staff to share their expertise within the school and across the wider trust. The relentless focus on professional development has, undoubtedly, contributed to the strong teaching practice seen during the inspection. Work is closely matched to the needs of pupils and additional adults provide close and effective support to those pupils who require it. Pupils also have dedicated time to capitalise on the helpful feedback they receive from staff.

The strong record of above-average progress and high standards over at least the last two years has not diminished your desire for further improvement. You recognise that the quality of achievement in sixth-form subjects is not consistently as strong as those in key stage 4. You have taken decisive action to strengthen sixth-form leadership and ensure that the high expectations found across the school are also embedded in this key stage. Consequently, students currently on academic and vocational courses are making good progress.

Governors share your determination to ensure that the school's provision fully meets pupils' learning and welfare needs. Governors have a strong understanding of the effectiveness of the school's provision, through their meetings and in their visits to the school. They use their skills and experience to support the work of leaders and provide challenge, when necessary, to hold them to account.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are highly effective and that a culture of vigilance permeates all aspects of the school's provision. Safeguarding is a standard item for discussion in all meetings. Staff and governors are exceptionally well trained and understand their safeguarding responsibilities. The designated safeguarding lead ensures that regular updates and training are provided when necessary. Appropriate checks are made on the recruitment of staff

and volunteers to ensure that they are suitable to work with children.

The designated safeguarding lead ensures that record-keeping is of a high quality. Highly effective processes are in place to follow up issues in a timely way, including close liaison with external agencies to support pupils when required to ensure that pupils are kept safe. All pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they felt safe in school and the overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey agreed. Pupils know who they can talk to if they have any worries or concerns. All tutor rooms have designated boxes for pupils to share concerns with their tutor. Pupils also have access to a school counsellor and online counselling services when they feel they need additional care and support. Pastoral care is a strength of the school and the clear majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's survey agree.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe through a comprehensive range of tutorials, assemblies and off-timetable 'life skills' sessions. Pupils talked about online safety, substance abuse and child sexual exploitation, for example. School records show that incidents of bullying, which pastoral leaders are aware of, are dealt with effectively. Pupils reported that incidences of bullying are rare and that they have confidence that staff would resolve any issues swiftly. Leaders have established a 'culture of kindness' which pupils recognise and act upon. This culture reinforces the exceptionally good conduct of pupils within lessons and around the school site.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have sustained a strong focus on ensuring high-quality teaching, learning and assessment. Across the curriculum, inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work and observations of learning show that pupils respond positively to the high expectations of their teachers and are fully engaged in their learning. They complete the activities set by teachers and present their work very well. Pupils' attitudes to learning are consistently positive, reflecting the school's LORIC attributes (leadership, organisation, resilience, initiative and communication). In a performing arts lesson, for example, pupils were highly enthusiastic about their characterisation of the 'sugar plum fairy'.
- The subject knowledge of teachers is good and is frequently used to great effect in questioning the depth of pupils' knowledge and understanding. Learning is well planned. Teachers have a precise understanding of pupils' needs and abilities which enable them to provide appropriate work. In the vast majority of lessons visited, inspectors observed pupils being routinely challenged to make good or better progress.
- Leaders have refined the school's approach to target-setting and reviewing pupils' progress. A tight system of checking the accuracy of teachers' assessment of pupils' work has enabled precise interventions to support pupils' progress when they have fallen behind. The close support provided, including additional after-school support sessions, continues to have a very positive impact on the progress of current pupils.
- Leaders have successfully established a strong and supportive school ethos,

underpinned by the school's 'culture of kindness' and 'character education'. These values are exemplified by pupils' exceptional conduct around the school site and during lessons. They respond promptly to teachers' instructions and are polite and respectful. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive and these are strongly reinforced by the school's house structure and tutoring arrangements.

- Leaders' actions to improve attendance and ensure that pupils rarely miss a day at school have proved successful. Overall attendance is well above the national average and the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school has reduced considerably over the past two years. No specific groups of pupils are disadvantaged by low attendance.
- Pupils are typically positive about the range of extra-curricular activities offered by the school. These include a range of sports, musical theatre, board games and subject support. Leaders recognise the need to encourage more pupils to participate in these types of activities to further enrich their learning.
- Students who spoke to the lead inspector were typically very positive about their experience in the sixth form. They reported their appreciation of sixth-form facilities, the support provided by their teachers and the breadth of careers information and advice. Published data shows that the progress made by students in the sixth-form has been below average in the past and there is some variation between subjects. However, leaders' drive and determination to see rapid improvement in the quality of sixth-form outcomes is beginning to bear fruit. Student progress and attendance is closely monitored by leaders, who intervene to ensure that students do not fall behind. Students currently studying academic and vocational courses are making good progress. Inspectors' visits to several post-16 lessons confirmed this.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the strategies to further improve the progress made by sixth-form students are continued.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Stevens
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors spoke with you, the head of school and other senior and middle leaders. Inspectors visited 18 parts of lessons across all key stages, to observe teaching and look at pupils' work. Visits were made to tutor time and a house assembly. Inspectors also held discussions with four groups of pupils representing all year groups. Inspectors scrutinised safeguarding arrangements and record-keeping, which included the school's record of recruitment checks on staff, staff training and the processes in place for referrals made to external agencies. A discussion took place with the school's designated safeguarding lead. Inspectors looked at the school's records for attendance and behaviour and examined a range of documentary evidence. These included the school's self-evaluation, academy improvement plan, school policies and information about pupils' current attainment and progress. A discussion was also held with the chair of the local governing body. Telephone conversations were also held with a senior executive leader for the Diverse Academies Learning Partnership and the link adviser for Lincolnshire local authority.

The lead inspector looked at the 46 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey, of which the majority of submissions were made by sixth-form students. The lead inspector also considered the views of 58 parents and carers through their response to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and considered the 43 responses to Ofsted's survey for staff.