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Mr Chris Armond
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mr Armond

Short inspection of Woodlands Academy

Following my visit to the school on 6 June 2019 with Ofsted Inspector John Edwards, 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 predecessor school was judged to be outstanding in April 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 outstanding as a result of this inspection.**

You have worked with purpose and vigour to maintain the high standard of education in the school since the last inspection. You continue to adapt in order to meet the needs of the pupils, sharing your passion and determination to secure the best possible outcomes for the young people who attend the school. School leaders, including the governing body and members of the trust, and staff share your genuine desire to provide as high a standard of education as possible.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They communicate well with each other and demonstrate respect for staff and visitors. Pupils work hard and become increasingly resilient learners because staff are skilled at providing positive role models. Pupils are encouraged to develop their social skills, as well as learning to communicate effectively. Key workers are in place for every pupil to support the pupils and their families and to provide them with valuable guidance. The school is a positive place to learn, where pupils are encouraged to have high aspirations and achieve well.

Pupils told inspectors they appreciate the extensive amount of support they are given by staff. They explained that teachers' expectations that they produce work of a high quality are the norm. Teachers are acutely aware of each individual pupil's needs and support them accordingly, giving them every opportunity to succeed in their learning. There is a clear intention by teachers that pupils' learning will not be affected by the behaviour of the minority. Pupils explained they felt their behaviour had improved since attending the school. However, they said teachers could be more consistent at times in how they manage pupils' behaviour.

You assess and track pupils' progress thoroughly. Since the last inspection of the predecessor school, staff and pupils have greater awareness of each pupil's capabilities. Pupils are also given regular opportunities to assess their own progress, which helps them to understand what they need to do in order to make further improvements to their work. Leaders work successfully to ensure that support for pupils is effective through early identification and the use of extensive support programmes. As a result, there is negligible difference between the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils and their peers.

At the time of the predecessor school's last inspection, inspectors identified the need to continue to improve the attendance of the few pupils who do not attend as often as they should in order to raise their achievement and enhance their personal development. You have approached this area for improvement with verve and purpose. However, despite a number of newly introduced initiatives, as yet, there is no improvement in pupils' overall attendance.

The high number of fixed-term exclusions last year was of concern. A lack of day-to-day leadership capacity was a significant factor in this. In the current academic year, the senior leadership team is back up to full capacity. As a result, the number of exclusions has reduced, although they are still too high.

Governors are fully supportive of you and the leadership team. They provide valuable guidance and support in the development of the school. Governors have an acute knowledge of the school improvement priorities and the staffing challenges you have previously experienced. They are well informed and keep a close eye on all areas of the school's work and performance. You provide governors and the trust with high-quality reports, including, for instance, valuable information about pupils' outcomes, as well as attendance and exclusion figures. Governors offer a good level of challenge to you in improving the quality of the provision and pupils' outcomes.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

You and the staff know pupils well and have a good understanding of pupils' needs. You ensure that staff are able to identify and report any concerns about pupils in a timely manner. Key staff are quick to react to any concerns. They take prompt and effective action to keep pupils safe and protect them from harm. Pupils explained

they know how to stay safe online and how they are ably supported by staff with issues around social media.

You work closely and effectively with other professionals and services to make sure that any potentially vulnerable pupils are well supported. You systematically check these pupils' progress, learning and attendance, and intervene quickly when they need additional help.

Inspection findings

- You have recently taken effective action to reinforce the senior leadership team. All senior leaders are very clear and competent in their roles and have a positive impact across the school. A strong and talented head of school, with good knowledge of how children learn, complements your role as executive headteacher. The school is well led and you are ably supported by the governing body, the Community Inclusive Trust, staff, parents and carers, who all recognise the challenges you face on a daily basis.
- For this inspection, a number of lines of enquiry were agreed. Inspectors examined how leaders, including governors, ensure that the curriculum is broad and balanced so that pupils achieve well. The curriculum is designed to meet pupils' needs closely, with a clear priority on keeping pupils in education. Pupils study a wide range of appropriate vocational subjects, helping them to stay focused on doing well.
- Senior leaders provide pupils with effective guidance and advice that are tailored very closely to their individual needs, while giving pupils access to meaningful vocational qualifications for the workplace. Work experience links pupils' current learning to the world of work, preparing them very well for their next steps in education or training. There were no school leavers who were not engaged in education or training last year.
- Leaders make effective use of assessment systems to monitor and track pupils' progress carefully and to update pupils' targets regularly. This ensures that pupils are provided with ongoing challenge. Those pupils who attend school well make strong progress from their starting points.
- Inspectors also evaluated the quality of teaching and learning and its impact on pupils' progress. Teachers expect pupils to work hard and pupils' achievements are celebrated. In learning observed by inspectors, teachers made clear links to pupils' prior learning so that pupils gained a much better understanding of the concepts. Teachers monitor pupils' progress closely. They take swift action to support any pupils who are not making the progress that they should.
- Inspectors also focused on whether leaders ensure that adults who support pupils' learning have the relevant subject knowledge. Staff appreciate the day-to-day support given to them by leaders and the opportunities they have to develop their skills further. As a result, staff are confident and skilled. They use good subject knowledge to teach pupils very well.

- Leaders' self-evaluation demonstrates that they have an accurate picture of teaching strengths and areas for development. There is particularly strong practice in the teaching of English. When necessary, leaders are robust in challenging teachers and holding them to account for improving their practice and achieving better outcomes for pupils.
- Attendance is below the national average. Leaders' actions to bring about improvements in pupils' attendance are yet to have the desired impact.
- Since the last inspection, you have radically changed the way in which you help pupils take responsibility for their actions and manage their behaviour. This work has had a profoundly positive impact. Pupils take pride in themselves and their school, with notable improvements in their conduct and their positive attitudes to learning. Parents who spoke with inspectors or responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were unequivocally positive about this and many other aspects of the school's work. Many said their children are 'thriving' as a result of the highly effective care and support they receive. Incidents of poor behaviour by pupils have reduced, although the number of fixed-term exclusions remains too high.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- efforts are redoubled to improve attendance and to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions
- the recent improvements to leadership are sustained.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees, 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

Jason Brooks
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, inspectors spoke with the executive headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and some support staff. The lead inspector met with the director of learning for the trust and the chair of the governing body. The head of school and the lead teacher for teaching and learning joined with inspectors in visiting classrooms, where they looked at pupils' work.

The inspection team completed an analysis of pupils' work. They spoke with pupils and staff throughout the day.

Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, before school and at social times. The lead inspector considered seven responses to the online questionnaire for parents, Parent View, and the school's own survey of parents' opinions.