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Mr Ian Ravenscroft
Head of School
Sirius Academy North
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Dear Mr Ravenscroft

Short inspection of Sirius Academy North

Following my visit to the school on 26 June 2019 with Lyndsey Brown, 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 December 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. In 2017, you and the school experienced a challenging period where standards of attainment and pupils' progress declined. However, standards improved in 2018. You have met these challenges by taking decisive actions. These have focused on the most important areas for improvement, including the development of leadership and the quality of teaching and learning. These actions have resulted in improving pupils' progress. Although these improvements are, in some cases, in their early stages, they are continuing and sustainable as a result of the strength of the leadership you and others provide.

Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They focus on the appropriate priorities and willingly engage with the school. They are determined to support leaders in bringing about the necessary improvements and, as such, hold leaders to account effectively. Governors make good use of the information provided by leaders to measure the impact of your actions on pupils' outcomes.

At the last inspection, you were asked to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. You were also asked to challenge all pupils in their learning, including the most able, and narrow any gaps in progress between different groups of pupils. In addition, you were asked to ensure that the school's policies on providing guidance to pupils so that they can improve their work were applied consistently across the school.

In response to these areas for improvement, you and your team have ensured that

the development of pupils' literacy is a priority. Pupils are given numerous opportunities to improve their literacy skills through extended writing tasks and the guidance they receive from teachers. Leaders have also ensured that the most able pupils are provided with tasks which challenge them to such an extent that their learning and understanding is deepened. Gaps between different groups of pupils are narrowing and teachers provide guidance to pupils to help them improve their work.

You have introduced a rigorous system of quality assurance focused on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. You have been determined to develop these systems so that collegiality and partnership are keystones of practice in the process. Leaders at all levels work alongside staff to identify development areas and these are acted upon with immediacy so that changes in practice have a rapid and positive impact on the progress and learning of pupils. The support which developing teachers require is closely linked to the school's professional development programmes. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning has improved and pupils' outcomes are improving across a wide range of subjects.

Leaders, at all levels, have improved the quality of assessment to ensure accuracy and reliability. Leaders have been further supported in these developments through their work with other schools within the trust. Leaders and teachers have an accurate view of pupils' progress, through rigorous approaches to the analysis of school progress information.

You have recognised that the progress of disadvantaged pupils, the most able pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has fallen behind others nationally who have similar starting points. The focus on these pupils is now a priority, and signs of improvement are evident in many subjects. As a result, pupils make better progress. Pupils also spoke highly of the improvements which have been made to teaching and learning during their time at the school. They praise leaders, teachers and pastoral staff for the support they are offered, particularly if they are having difficulty with their studies. Responses in the pupil and staff surveys were overwhelmingly positive, with both pupils and staff reporting their pride in being a member of the school's community. Many pupils would recommend the school to others.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that the arrangements for safeguarding are effective and fit for purpose. Staff receive appropriate training in child protection procedures. They are confident in their understanding of the actions they would need to take if they have any concerns about pupils. The designated safeguarding lead demonstrates knowledge and experience through the records kept. These records evidence the prompt actions the school takes when safeguarding concerns arise.

A small number of pupils access education off site, attending a local provider. Staff ensure that the appropriate checks are carried out, making sure that these pupils are safe. Any absences are followed up rigorously and pupils' progress is checked

against the school's expectations for them.

Throughout the inspection, pupils were found to have positive attitudes to learning, always showing respect towards teachers, other pupils and visitors. Inspectors observed no disruption to lessons during the inspection. Pupils spoke positively about their experience at the school and reported that pupils show respect and tolerance towards each other. Pupils value the guidance they have been given about keeping themselves safe, and the support and advice that staff offer them.

Inspection findings

- You have focused on improving the progress of the most able pupils. Using your well-developed systems of quality assurance and professional development, leaders and teachers have developed their planning for learning so that it stretches and challenges pupils' understanding. Inspectors saw the impact of this focus in the workbooks of the most able pupils. Their work was generally of a high quality, although some variability remains in the level of challenge they consistently receive.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning has improved. Pupils report that the work in lessons is now more challenging. Lesson observations and the work seen in pupils' books show that current pupils are making good progress across subjects. Teachers have raised the expectations of all pupils through their planning to stretch and challenge them. Inspectors observed a range of high-quality work in pupils' books, which consolidated and deepened pupils' understanding. However, some inconsistencies remain in teachers' questioning of pupils to deepen their understanding.
- You have identified the need to improve pupils' literacy skills as a priority. The foundation of your work begins before pupils arrive at the school, through the strong transition partnerships you have established with your primary schools. Once pupils arrive at the school, pupils' reading skills are developed and improved. You recognise that these skills are of high importance to ensure that pupils can access the curriculum they will encounter as they progress through the school. Inspectors observed teachers across a range of subjects, providing pupils with opportunities to develop their literacy and vocabulary through extended writing and role play. Teachers encourage pupils to correct mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- You have correctly identified the progress of those pupils who are disadvantaged and those with SEND as a focus for improvement. Improvements in the external examinations in 2018 were made. However, further improvement remains a priority. Current progress information across year groups evidences a positive picture, but you have not been complacent. School leaders at all levels, including governors, are determined to raise the profile of those pupils who are disadvantaged and with SEND to ensure that they receive the support they need to achieve at least as well as other pupils who have similar starting points. Inspectors were impressed with the improvements those pupils with SEND are now beginning to make. Equally, those pupils who are disadvantaged are beginning to catch up with other pupils nationally who have similar starting

points. Leaders have ensured that disadvantaged pupils attend school regularly and display positive attitudes towards their learning. Consequently, attendance and behaviour are not barriers to the progress that disadvantaged pupils are making at the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they build on the improved outcomes in 2018, so all groups of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, continue to make good progress
- questioning from teachers consistently demands a depth of response from pupils which supports their learning
- pupils are stretched and challenged in all subjects, especially the most able pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the executive headteacher of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Kingston-Upon-Hull City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Barry Found
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors observed teaching and learning in English, mathematics, science, history, beliefs and values, drama, food technology and photography.

Inspectors met with you, as well as senior and middle leaders. I also met with the chair of the governing body. Inspectors met with pupils from Year 7 to Year 10 and talked to pupils informally during lessons, breaktime and lunchtime about their views and experience at school.

Inspectors carried out a scrutiny of pupils' books with the subject leaders of English. We also looked at a range of school documentation, including current assessment information, leaders' self-evaluation, records about the behaviour and attendance of current pupils and information about safeguarding.

We took account of 50 responses to the staff questionnaire, seven responses to Ofsted's online parent survey, Parent View, including six written comments by parents and 66 responses to the pupil questionnaire.