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Mr John Warren
Principal
The Grove Academy
59 Grove Road
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Dear Mr Warren

Short inspection of The Grove Academy

Following my visit to the school on 16 July 2019 with David Penny, 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 outstanding 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 outstanding as a result of this inspection.**

Since your appointment as principal, you and your senior team have worked hard to maintain the outstanding level of safeguarding and welfare in the school since the last inspection. Through challenging circumstances, you have developed and amended the educational offer for pupils to ensure that pupils are safe and are receiving a tailored educational offer. You are passionate and have a vision for the future which is understood and supported by the staff and the trust.

A bespoke curriculum offer engages and meets the needs of each individual pupil well, for example offering a range of core qualifications alongside a vocational or work experience offer. You have provided a calm, nurturing environment, with clear boundaries, which allows your pupils to settle quickly into learning. Pupils observed during the inspection were engaged with learning, both within the school and at work experience.

Grove Academy's transition arrangements successfully help new pupils to settle. Pupils and their families are well supported by leaders to integrate quickly. Pupils returning to their original school or going to a new school are positive about their experiences of moving on. As a result of the education received and the preventative behaviour work that is undertaken, over 80% of pupils who returned to mainstream education successfully managed the move.

At the time of the previous inspection in July 2015, leaders and governors were asked to make some improvements. You have worked well to address these overall. For example, consistency in the use of the daily written records enables pupils to understand what they have done well in a lesson and what they need to improve. You were also asked to ensure that the intervention of support staff does not hinder pupils' ability to work independently. While you have put some measures in place to address this, your efforts have not had the desired effect in all subjects. This is because the quality of classroom teaching and support is currently variable.

Expectations of pupils' progress evolve as the year moves forward, showing that leaders do not exclusively measure pupils' progress from their original starting points. The school's view of how much actual progress is made each year is therefore difficult to assess. Workbooks sampled during the inspection showed a varied picture of progress. All pupils leave Grove Academy with a qualification. However, in the academic year 2018/19, only 63% of the Year 11 intake took a GCSE qualification in English and 88% in mathematics. Leaders are not clear enough about the reasons for the variability in pupils' outcomes, nor are they sure about the impact of their actions on speeding up pupils' progress. Addressing this is an important next step.

Typically, pupils' attendance improves during their time at Grove Academy. In all cases, attendance is higher than at the previous education setting. For some pupils this figure is significantly higher. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has significantly increased this academic year. Leaders acknowledge that further improving attendance rates for all pupils, especially those who are regularly absent, is an ongoing priority.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have established a strong, effective safeguarding culture in school, creating a safe and secure environment for pupils and staff. Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

The designated safeguarding team is highly knowledgeable in relation to safeguarding practice and the needs of pupils. The deputy safeguarding lead has built strong relationships with external support agencies and uses these relationships well to ensure that pupils, and their families, are supported both in and out of school. The governor with responsibility for safeguarding has wide experience in this field, providing effective checking and monitoring of school systems and procedures.

The wider staff team has a strong working knowledge of safeguarding procedures and understands the complex risks to pupils at Grove Academy. Staff are vigilant in identifying if pupils are engaged in risk-taking behaviours and other forms of neglect or abuse and they know how to report any form of allegation.

You and the deputy designated safeguarding lead ensure that there are ongoing

opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe. Through targeted intervention work, the wider curriculum and informative displays, pupils are encouraged and supported to keep themselves safe online and in the real world.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we looked at whether the quality of teaching remains outstanding and whether this leads to pupils making rapid progress from their unique starting points. Your bespoke curriculum has helped to ensure that some teachers plan effectively to meet the needs of individual pupils. Where this is the case, pupils engage with the lesson and make good progress. Where pupils are less motivated to learn, progress is slow. A personalised education is available to all.
- Teachers, and leaders, know individual pupils very well. They can clearly articulate each pupil's needs, their social, emotional and behavioural journey and any barriers to learning they have. This enables some teachers to link learning tasks and classroom activities to pupils' academic and social needs. For example, during the inspection, pupils were learning about rhetorical questions through a presentation on a topic of their choosing, such as healthy friendships and the risks associated with gaming. However, in some lessons, progress is hindered by teachers over-supporting pupils. This limits opportunities for pupils to develop their independence.
- During the inspection, a visit was made to a work experience provider. During this visit, the work ethic, attitude and behaviour of the pupils were strengths, as were the adult support and supervision supplied by Grove Academy. The provision is appropriate and accredited. Pupils enjoy attending.
- A further focus of this inspection was the behaviour of pupils. Behaviour management is a collaborative process at Grove Academy. All incidents of negative behaviour are logged and monitored, and staff collectively discuss incidents and decide on the best course of action for the pupil. This ensures that all parties involved feel included. Negative behaviour incidents reduce the longer a pupil stays with the school.
- The rate of fixed-term exclusions has risen during this academic year. Leaders' analysis shows that exclusions are given for violent or damaging behaviours. Pupils who receive more than one period of exclusion are rare. No pupils have had more than two periods of fixed-term exclusion this year. This is due to leaders' bespoke reintegration methods and individualised curriculum planning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- methods to improve attendance continue to be developed to ensure a rapid increase in the attendance of pupils, especially those who are persistently absent
- they effectively increase the opportunities for pupils to work independently

- measures to track and monitor pupils' progress are used consistently to provide a clear picture of progress in the school.

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 North Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tricia Stevens
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, senior leaders and middle leaders. Meetings were held with trustees and a representative from the Delta Academies Trust. Inspectors observed pupils arriving at school, leaving to go on an educational visit and in lessons. A visit was made to an alternative provision work experience placement. Inspectors spoke informally to pupils and staff. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including behaviour and safeguarding logs, work in books, policies and a review of the spending of additional funding. They also reviewed the school's record of checks made on the suitability of adults to work with pupils.