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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Alan Warboys
Principal
Ossett Academy and Sixth Form College
Storrs Hill Road
Ossett
West Yorkshire
WF5 0DG

Dear Mr Warboys

Short inspection of Ossett Academy and Sixth Form College

Following my visit to the school on 30 January 2018 with Lynne Selkirk and Catherine Garrett, Ofsted Inspectors, 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 September 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment, you have made some tough decisions in order to confront weaknesses, raise expectations and improve the school. You have made substantial changes in leadership at all levels. You have led a searching analysis of the quality of teaching across the school and are now beginning to see the signs of more sustained and rapid progress.

While there were some strengths in pupils' recent outcomes, together with governors, you are unflinchingly honest and accurate about where there is still work to be done. Your determination that all pupils will achieve as highly as they are capable is non-negotiable. All leaders share this clarity of purpose. They are now working as a team to accelerate pupils' progress further. The recently established team of subject leaders are sharing best practice as a means to improve outcomes and do not shy away from holding their staff to account.

Since the previous inspection, teachers are now using information about pupils' abilities in their planning to challenge different groups of pupils. Consequently, most pupils are making stronger progress, including disadvantaged pupils. Teachers' checking of what pupils have learned continues to be variable. However, you had already identified this as an area for development.

The school is an orderly, calm environment. Pupils conduct themselves sensibly and with respect for one another. However, there is some parental and pupil concern

about pupils' exit from school adjoining the busy road at the end of the day. You are aware of this and have recently conducted a review of procedures and implemented changes as a result. However, you told me that you will consult with the local authority with regard to the traffic management plan and review your own procedures again in light of this. Based on the evidence we saw, disruption of learning is rare, although some pupils and parents said that there is sometimes disruption in certain lessons. Furthermore, some pupils feel that staff do not always apply the behaviour system consistently or effectively. You are aware of this and are taking the necessary actions to work with staff.

Governors are equally determined that outcomes for pupils should improve further. They acknowledge that, until recently, they did not keep a sufficiently close eye on how pupils were doing. However, they now have the knowledge and skills to enable them to do so.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Quite rightly, safeguarding is a priority for all staff. The leaders entrusted with safeguarding matters act quickly, and with tenacity, to address any issues that arise. Leaders have ensured that the necessary policies and processes are secure. Pupils told us that they feel safe in school. They said that bullying is rare and most agreed that when it happens, an adult will sort it out. Some parents are less confident in the school's handling of bullying. However, you are not complacent and continually review and improve the support that is in place for pupils.

There is now a weekly staff briefing on safeguarding so that they know what signs to look for and can act quickly when there are problems. As well as this, leaders have made sure that staff are up to date in their safeguarding training. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through their form periods, assemblies and 'life' lessons.

Governors place a strong emphasis on the effectiveness of safeguarding in school. They have completed safer recruitment training. The chair of the governing body undertakes regular checks of the single central register. Governors use the local authority's audit of safeguarding in schools to benchmark and improve their ongoing work to keep pupils safe in school.

Inspection findings

- We saw evidence of how the change in culture has started to improve the progress of pupils. For example, teachers regularly challenge pupils to produce high quality work. In English, for instance, pupils can write skilfully sequenced work at length and in detail. In mathematics, teachers challenge the most able pupils by asking effectively focused questions.
- There is evidence of improvement in other subject areas. For example, in science, pupils use key words to grapple with the interpretation of graphs. In history, pupils were able to take complex information, select the most important aspects and re-present it in their own words. There was thoughtful questioning

and deliberating from pupils in geography. In French, pupils use complex vocabulary and grammar in their speech and writing.

- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Teachers ensure that pupils have the necessary time and support to produce well-crafted work. As a result, pupils take a pride in what they are doing. This was seen in how they presented their work in different subjects, particularly at key stage 4.
- In the sixth form, teaching enables students to work collaboratively to further explore and discuss their learning. It also gives students the opportunity to make progress through working independently, under the guidance of the teacher, to improve the quality of their coursework assignments. While teachers did check that students had understood the key learning before moving on to the next stage, this was variable across subjects. The recently appointed leader for post-16 is aware of where practice requires further strengthening and is taking firm action.
- You are now taking a firmer line on behaviour. You have higher expectations of how pupils should conduct themselves and, as a result, the behaviour policy is more rigorously applied. As a consequence of this, fixed-term and permanent exclusions have risen during the last year. Fixed-term exclusions are now in line with the national average and permanent exclusions are above the national average. However, in order to reduce the need for exclusion, you have been proactive in establishing partnerships across the academy trust and with appropriate alternative providers. There have been no permanent exclusions this year.
- The academy trustees and the governors provide you with strong support in your work to improve the school. They have a very clear, accurate and honest picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a result, they are able to hold you and other leaders to account for the performance of the school. Through this support and challenge, they share your determined, and high, aspirations for the pupils of the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress of pupils is further strengthened in each key stage by:
 - teachers consistently asking questions to assess pupils' level of understanding before moving on
- teachers apply the school's system for behaviour management consistently.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body, the chair of the board of trustees, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wakefield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Steve Shaw
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I met with you and the associate principal, a group of subject leaders, two academy trustees and a group of governors. I had a telephone conversation with the school's improvement partner. I also spoke on the telephone with one parent. Members of the inspection team met with groups of pupils from key stages 3, 4 and 5 and also spoke informally with them around the school. Inspectors met with the leaders responsible for safeguarding, a group of teachers and other leaders. We conducted joint visits to lessons with the associate principal and senior leader for teaching and learning, where inspectors looked at pupils' books and spoke with pupils about what they were learning and their progress. We also visited lessons on our own. We looked in detail at pupils' books, both with senior leaders present and on our own. I took into account results from Ofsted's online questionnaires for staff (71 responses) and Parent View (141 responses), including 131 free-text responses. We looked a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, plans, safeguarding records, assessment information and other documents available on the school website.