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Mrs Elaine Silson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Silson

Short inspection of Allerton High School

Following my visit to the school on 20 February 2018 with Stephen Crossley, Ofsted Inspector, and Michael Maddison, 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 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. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Your tenacity, focus and unwavering desire to ensure that the education on offer at your school is of the highest quality are palpable. You constantly strive for excellence in all areas of school life, and as a result, the school's vision of 'enabling young people to achieve success' is very much alive. You have an eye for detail, and you check the effectiveness of provision with great precision. You use the information you gather to plan effectively for improvement. You are bold in your decision-making, and act in the best interests of the pupils in your care. You are highly effective, inclusive and caring. Senior and middle leaders are happy to serve under your leadership and replicate your principled style. As a result, leadership across the school is strong. The governing body rightly appreciates the talents of leaders at the school.

Pupils arrive at school in Year 7 with average standards of attainment overall. In both 2016 and 2017, pupils left Year 11 having reached standards that are well above the national average, and having made exceptional progress compared to their peers. The progress pupils made overall in a wide variety of subjects, including

mathematics, humanities and modern foreign languages, was in the top 10% of all schools nationally in both 2016 and 2017. Overall progress for pupils was in the top 3% of schools in 2017. Disadvantaged pupils, for example, made progress equivalent to nearly a whole grade more on average than all pupils nationally in all of their subjects. As a result of the standards they reached, pupils were well prepared for the next stages in their education, training or employment. Inspection evidence confirms that pupils currently at school are also making very strong progress. You are aware that some students in sixth form made less progress in 2017 than in 2016, and have addressed this for current sixth formers.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils. Teachers ensure that pupils grapple with subject content, and help pupils improve subject-specific knowledge and skills. Teachers use subject-specific vocabulary well, and expect pupils to explain concepts with precise vocabulary. Teaching is characterised by strong questioning. Teachers check exactly how much pupils understand about a topic and then push them forward from that point. Support is equally effective with pupils who are struggling with particular concepts, and those who need that extra push to reach the very highest levels of understanding. In sixth form, students benefit from well-structured courses, knowledgeable teachers and confident delivery of new subject material.

Your curriculum is both bold and unique. From Year 8 onwards, pupils can make choices about some of the subjects that they study. This includes choosing 'gateway subjects' where pupils refine their choices in preparation for GCSE options, and have the opportunity to study different subjects, such as business studies and enterprise. Throughout key stage 4 there are opportunities to study different subjects, develop generic skills and understand the pressure of external examinations. The structure you have created ensures that the majority of students study a modern foreign language and a humanities subject, and they experience success in doing so. Some pupils use the options system to choose a pathway that offers them more support in English and mathematics. Others focus on developing independence in preparation for their studies in the sixth form, through the extended project qualification or developing wider skills through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Pupils make excellent progress as a result of excellent teaching, a well-considered curriculum and by they themselves focusing so well in lessons.

Parents, carers and pupils also have very positive views of the school. One pupil said to an inspector that 'Teachers don't give up on you here.' Inspectors saw first hand the level of commitment that staff and leaders have for pupils in their care. Comments made by parents, pupils and staff, including responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) were overwhelmingly positive.

You and your team have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. As a result of effective leadership, achievement has risen even further and the quality of teaching has improved. The progress that students make in the sixth form has also improved since the previous inspection.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team, including governors, has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Safeguarding training is recorded and monitored effectively to ensure that all staff have up-to-date information and a secure knowledge and understanding of how to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Statutory checks on staff are undertaken.

Policies and procedures are in place and meet requirements. However, school leaders have also ensured that the school is a place that is safe, harmonious and respectful. Pupils are able to be themselves, hold their own beliefs and opinions, and learn from one another. Your school is diverse. Pupils come from many different ethnic backgrounds and religious backgrounds. One pupil told me that 'We learn about different religions and we also learn from different religions.'

Your staff apply sanctions and rewards for pupils systematically. Pupils told me that there is a mutual respect between teachers and pupils. This leads to behaviour in class and around the building that helps them focus and learn. Any arguments between pupils are quickly dealt with, and pupils have confidence that the staff will help if ever there is a more serious issue. Pupils told me about how the school teaches them to stay safe, and referenced relationships and sex education, and drugs education. During the inspection, an assembly on e-safety was seen, which used humour to engage the pupils, and contained sensible advice concerning online passwords.

School policies, staff training, the harmonious school community, and curriculum coverage all help ensure that pupils are safe at school.

Inspection findings

- Pupils currently at school are making very strong progress. You make sure that you collect precise and useful information about the progress pupils are making and the standards they are reaching across different subjects and across year groups. You ensure that middle leaders use this information to support any pupils who are falling behind, and to further improve teaching in classrooms. There is a high level of consistency in lessons. As a result of an intelligent use of pupil progress information, an innovative curriculum, and strong teaching, the quality of education on offer continues to improve.
- The progress that some students in the sixth form made in 2017 was less strong than that of students in 2016. You analysed the results that students achieved, and, as a result, you have been focusing on the quality of provision for the most able students in your sixth form. The rate of progress of students currently at school has improved. Your sixth form is inclusive, and you do your utmost to support students of different abilities, and those who sometimes struggle with workload or daily life. You and your team focus on developing life skills on the part of the students and on ensuring that they are ambitious in their choices for the next stages of education or employment. As a result, the profile of destinations for your students is impressive, with many beginning their studies at

prestigious universities. Sixth formers can choose from a wide selection of subjects, and have numerous opportunities to contribute to the school community and develop wider skills during their time at school.

- As part of the inspection, I looked at the quality of support given to pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. I also looked at the support given to pupils who have additional needs relating to speech, language and communication who are attached to the school's specialist resource base. Teachers and teaching assistants are aware of the needs of the pupils in their classes. They tailor learning activities to ensure that those who have additional needs are able to join in, and these pupils therefore make progress similar to that of their peers. Therapies and other specific programmes used to support pupils who have additional needs relating to speech, language and communication are correctly matched to their need, and have a positive impact.
- An additional area of focus during the inspection was the quality of your improvement planning. I wanted to check that you are still focusing on any areas of relative weakness in order to continually develop the education on offer at your school. I can confirm this is the case. Historically, you noted relative weaknesses in modern foreign languages, for example. You improved provision and in 2017 the progress that pupils made in these subjects was significantly above the national average. More recently, you have ensured that rates of attendance have increased, and that the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has decreased. Your finger is still firmly on the pulse and you have turned your eye to other areas of school life as you continue your pursuit of excellence.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- rates of progress that sixth-form students make are maintained and further improved.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Wardle
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

As part of this inspection, I considered the extent to which leaders, including governors, have ensured that the rates of progress pupils have made at key stages 3 and 4 in recent years have been maintained. I also looked at the progress current students are making in the sixth form. I explored the quality of support given to pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. In addition, we looked at the accuracy of

school self-evaluation and the strength of leaders' improvement plans. I looked at the extent to which leaders ensure that pupils are safe at school and how effectively pupils in the school and students in the sixth form deal with the pressures of school and modern-day life.

During the inspection, we met with you, the deputy headteachers and other members of the leadership team, including the head of sixth form. We also met with four members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair. We spoke to a variety of middle leaders. We observed teaching and learning with members of the senior leadership team and discussed our findings. We spoke to three groups of pupils at lunchtime and spoke to others at breaktime and around school. An assembly was also observed. We reviewed pupils' work from a wide range of subjects from different year groups, including the sixth form. You presented information detailing pupils' progress and attainment, the school's self-evaluation document and the school development plan. You presented the curriculum that is on offer to pupils. We also discussed the school's journey of improvement with a representative of the local authority. A variety of other documents were considered, including those relating to safeguarding and policies on the school's website. We considered the 73 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View), the 49 responses to the staff questionnaire, and the responses to the pupil questionnaire. A group of parents was spoken to at the beginning of the school day.