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Mr John Burridge  
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Dear Mr Burridge

### **Short inspection of Lealands High School**

Following my visit to the school on 16 March 2017 with Ofsted Inspector Paul O'Shea, 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 May 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You and your senior colleagues have led the school with determination, commitment and integrity. You have worked as a team to consolidate and enhance the school's strengths, and to address areas requiring further improvement. The strength of leadership at the school is recognised by a large majority of pupils, staff and parents alike. You have helped to shape an inclusive school, where there are high expectations of what all pupils can achieve, and where every individual pupil receives strong levels of support, guidance and care. As a result, almost all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and the most vulnerable, move successfully to the next stage of their education or employment.

Pupils clearly enjoy school. They feel valued and well supported. They are highly appreciative that staff are consistently prepared to go 'the extra mile' to support their learning. Pupils attend regularly as a result. Overall attendance is higher than the national average and persistent absence is in line with it. School leaders have successfully prioritised the welfare and personal development of pupils. Leaders have helped to create a community where diversity is valued and where all pupils feel they belong. Pupils are proud of their school as a result. They move around the site in a calm and orderly way and look after their excellent facilities carefully.

Teaching continues to be effective. There is a purposeful and productive atmosphere in almost all lessons. Pupils work diligently and often with enthusiasm. Teachers create and sustain overwhelmingly constructive, trusting relationships. Pupils are happy to contribute to lessons and they ask and answer questions articulately. They are not afraid of being wrong. Inspectors heard pupils of all abilities read in class with confidence and clarity.

Since the last inspection, pupils have usually made strong progress. Between 2013 and 2015, overall levels of progress were in line with, or above, national averages. The published progress figures for 2016 were not as strong. However, the school's rigorous analysis indicates that the overall figures were skewed by particular factors, some of which pertained to the circumstances of a small number of individual pupils. The school stands firmly behind its inclusion policy, which supports all of its most vulnerable pupils to focus on the particular grades they need in order to access the next stage of their education and employment. The published progress information also does not reflect over 10% of the cohort who joined the school without any information about their key stage 2 performance. These pupils, many of whom joined the school in the early stages of English language acquisition, made very strong progress. This reflects the fact that pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve extremely well at Lealands High School.

The school is not complacent when weaknesses become apparent. The school's self-evaluation is thorough and perceptive and school leaders ensure that robust plans are quickly put in place to secure any necessary improvements when areas for development are identified. Since the 2016 results, you and your senior team have worked with the required urgency to bring about the necessary improvements. Difficult decisions are made when teaching is not good enough. You and other senior leaders have provided effective support to recently appointed subject leaders in humanities, mathematics and science, and planned well-targeted and relevant training for all teachers. This has helped to accelerate the progress of the pupils who are currently in the school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders, including governors, have ensured that there is a culture of safeguarding within the school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. The school site is safe and secure. Systems for monitoring vulnerable pupils are rigorous and records relating to child protection matters are maintained to a good standard, with details of actions and resolutions logged appropriately. Pupils feel safe and are confident that poor behaviour, including bullying, is rare and dealt with effectively if it does occur. The curriculum helps pupils to understand and manage risks, including the safe use of the internet and social networking sites. Staff are quick in identifying and following up any concerns that they have about individual pupils. The team works successfully with external agencies so that pupils rapidly get the help that they need.

## Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to investigate current standards of teaching and achievement for disadvantaged pupils. This is because disadvantaged pupils at key stage 4 in 2016 did not make as much progress as they should. It was the performance of disadvantaged pupils which largely explains the overall fall in outcomes for the 2016 key stage 4 cohort. Their non-disadvantaged peers continued to perform well.
- You and your senior colleagues have responded with due urgency. You quickly and meticulously evaluated the performance of the 2016 cohort. You introduced a range of strategies which drew heavily on the effective practice used in other highly successful schools.
- All staff are very conscious that disadvantaged pupils' achievement is an extremely high priority for the school. Staff training has focused on ensuring that all teachers convert their thorough understanding of individual pupils' needs into practical classroom strategies which effectively accelerate progress. The school's monitoring and quality-assurance processes now focus appropriately on the progress of disadvantaged pupils.
- The school's current assessment information suggests that the progress made by disadvantaged pupils currently in the school has accelerated. The school acknowledges, however, that there is still room to sharpen further its provision for these pupils. For example, the school has not been effective in successfully engaging with the parents of disadvantaged pupils. As a result, the attendance of these parents at school events, such as parents' evenings, remains low. While school leaders are very thorough in their evaluation of the effectiveness of their disadvantaged strategies, they do not communicate this analysis as effectively or helpfully as they should to parents through the school website.
- Pupils with middle prior attainment have not made as much progress at your school as their peers who join the school with high or low prior attainment. This shaped my next line of enquiry. You and your senior colleagues recognise that, in previous years, the focus of additional interventions has been too targeted towards lower-attaining pupils. You also acknowledge that your emphasis on stretch and challenge has been focused most explicitly on the most able, rather than middle-prior-attaining pupils.
- You are now monitoring the progress of all pupils meticulously and ensuring that additional support is provided whenever a pupil falls behind, including pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You have also used staff training to ensure that teachers build appropriately high expectations of progress into their lesson planning. As a result, the school's current assessment information suggests that the progress being made by middle-prior-attaining pupils is now much stronger.
- However, this would still represent progress which remains relatively weaker compared with other prior attainment groups at the school. The school marking and feedback policy is implemented particularly inconsistently in middle-attaining sets. As a result, pupils in these teaching groups do not routinely benefit from the

rigour of feedback implicit in the school's policy to enhance their progress.

- A further line of enquiry was to ensure that you had acted robustly to address weaknesses in the crucial subject areas of humanities, science and mathematics which were evident in the 2016 key stage 4 results. These areas are now suitably prioritised within the school's development planning. In each of these cases, not only are new subject leaders in place, but a number of new teachers have been appointed in each team. As a result, you are confident that each of these departmental areas has been considerably strengthened.
- We observed teaching and learning, scrutinised pupil work and held discussions with relevant leaders in each of these subject areas. The evidence gathered indicates that the 2016 outcomes represented a dip, rather than any entrenched decline, and that this dip was accentuated by the very weak outcomes of a small group of vulnerable pupils within the cohort. Evidence from subject leaders shows that they are supporting teachers and further developing the quality of teaching within their teams.
- A small amount of variability in the quality of teaching in science and mathematics remains. This is because you have continued to face difficulties in recruiting high-quality candidates in these subject areas. Where you have had to make choices, you have prioritised deploying the most effective teachers to where pupils need to make the most rapid progress.
- The previous inspection report recommended that the school worked to strengthen middle leadership and governance. This provided the last key focus for the inspection. You have worked hard to ensure that middle leaders become crucial drivers of change within the school, leading their own departmental self-evaluation and development planning. Middle leaders say that they feel increasingly trusted to make important decisions within the school. Clear mechanisms are now in place to ensure that less-experienced subject leaders are supported and guided by their more-experienced colleagues.
- Governors are entirely committed to protecting and enhancing the school's inclusive ethos. They are very supportive of the school's leadership and are increasingly expert about specific areas of their responsibility. They have overseen important changes within the school's curriculum. For example, they have been clear about the importance of modern foreign languages. They have been mindful that too few pupils in the past have chosen to continue with language courses into key stage 4. They have worked with you to ensure that languages are promoted more effectively and, as a result, the proportion of pupils who opt for a language has risen from 15% to 50%.
- We discussed ways in which governors could further sharpen the way that they challenge you over the details of performance information, for example through a deeper exploration with school leaders regarding their rationale for educating a small number of pupils through programmes of alternative provision.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they strengthen further the school's provision for disadvantaged pupils, particularly ensuring that they act effectively to engage parents to work in partnership with the school to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils
- they effectively monitor the consistency with which staff implement the school's policy on marking and feedback, especially the impact of this guidance on the progress of the middle-prior-attaining pupils
- they continue to address remaining inconsistencies in the quality of science and mathematics teaching.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Lawrence  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

We held meetings with you, other school leaders, teachers, governors, groups of pupils and a representative from the local authority. We observed pupils' learning in a series of short visits to a number of lessons, and most of these visits were conducted jointly with members of the school's leadership team. We scrutinised a range of school documentation, including policies, the school's self-evaluation, the school's improvement plan, safeguarding records and information about pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance. We considered the views expressed in 62 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, together with 38 questionnaires returned by pupils and 58 returned by school staff.