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12 July 2017

Mr Craig Weaver
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Dear Mr Weaver

Short inspection of Carlton le Willows Academy

Following my visit to the school on 27 June 2017 with Paul Sweeney, 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 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. Leaders know the school's strengths and are honest about its areas for improvement. School leaders are highly aspirational and set challenging targets for pupils of all ages. Leaders share a strong commitment to improving the school; middle leaders told me that the school's motto, 'Nothing but the best', applies to all who work and learn at the school. In their questionnaire responses, school staff were overwhelmingly supportive of your leadership and drive to improve the school.

At Carlton le Willows Academy, there is a strong sense of community, which staff, pupils and governors all mentioned to inspectors. Governors are keenly aware of the school's importance in the local community and work closely with local primary schools to provide support and improve transition. The school's trustees established the role of acting head of school in September 2016, to support the school during the development of a multi-academy trust. Since then, you and the acting head of school have used this extra leadership capacity to improve the school further. You are outward looking and your collaborations with local secondary and primary schools have helped strengthen teaching and assessment.

Governors and trustees know the school well and plan carefully for the school's future development. Leaders and governors have a strong educational vision and work to develop the whole young person. School leaders ensure that pupils'

personal development is prioritised alongside their academic progress. Leaders offer a broad, exciting extra-curricular programme, constructed around character development. Parents told me that they value the way school staff help to develop character traits in pupils, such as resilience and confidence, through lessons and enrichment activities. Pupils also learn what it means to be a good citizen; they take part in a wide range of opportunities, which prepare them well for life in modern Britain, such as involvement with the National Citizen Service and mock elections.

Pupils feel challenged in lessons and enjoy their learning; they told inspectors that teachers are friendly and help to make learning fun. Leaders ensure that pupils get good-quality careers education. During the inspection, Year 10 took part in a careers programme, where there were high levels of employer engagement. Year 10 pupils said that the careers day had made them think more deeply about their future options. Pupils share the school's values and can explain the importance of good behaviour.

You have responded fully to the areas for improvement from the last inspection, including the importance of teachers setting challenging activities. Inspectors carefully examined pupils' work, which showed that pupils were learning well because teachers set demanding tasks. Leaders have created a curriculum that encourages pupils to make connections between subjects and apply this learning beyond the classroom. Teachers talk about teaching regularly and share their ideas for improving pupils' learning. This collaborative approach has helped to enrich teaching. Subject leaders now check the quality of teaching and learning in lessons carefully and ensure that teaching is of a high standard.

You have maintained and developed the school's strengths, including those in the sixth form and in mathematics. Sixth form achievement, in both academic and vocational courses, is still a strength of the school. All groups of students in the sixth form make good progress, including disadvantaged students. Progress and attainment in mathematics continue to be above the national averages. You have also used the excellent practice in your areas of strength to improve leadership and teaching elsewhere in the school. For example, you saw the positive impact in mathematics of work to support pupils who were falling behind and used this approach to improve pupils' progress elsewhere, particularly in science and English. This is one of the reasons why pupils' progress in English and science is improving. Leaders have ensured that intervention work to support those falling behind is now an area of strength across the school.

Leaders are tackling the remaining weaknesses of the school. These include the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You also recognise that disadvantaged pupils' progress needs to improve further and are taking robust action to make this happen. Leaders' actions have already led to improvements in the progress of disadvantaged pupils, though you know that there is more to do to ensure that pupils consistently achieve their potential. Leaders have improved support services for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties; this includes a new inclusion area. School leaders are aware

of the need to support more pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to make higher levels of progress.

Safeguarding is effective

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. Leaders' recruitment checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children are exemplary. All staff have received up-to-date training in the safeguarding of children and any staff who join the school during the year receive an induction to the school's systems for keeping children safe.

Staff ensure that pupils understand the risks they face, including those online. Pupils appreciate their learning on online safety. Pupils also feel confident that they can bring online safety concerns to the attention of adults in the school. School staff monitor pupils' use of computers in school carefully, to ensure pupils' safety.

School leaders liaise effectively with external agencies and speedily refer any welfare concerns to the right professionals. Leaders ensure that the school responds to pupils' needs and offers good support for all pupils, including children looked after. Staff know how to use the school's systems if they have any concerns about a pupil's welfare. During the inspection, however, not all staff were fully aware of the external agencies that they could take safeguarding concerns to directly. You have recently strengthened your safeguarding policy in this respect, but at the time of the inspection, this policy had not yet gone to staff. You are addressing this immediately.

Inspection findings

- Leaders make effective use of the pupil premium to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils. School leaders use this funding to tackle some of the main barriers that stop disadvantaged pupils from achieving as they should. You have made some key appointments in educational and support staff, funded through the pupil premium, that are having a significant impact on the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantaged pupils' progress at key stage 3 is now good. Disadvantaged pupils' progress in English and science has improved, partly because of additional teaching and intervention, funded by the pupil premium. Leaders are aware, however, that disadvantaged boys have made less progress than girls and have adjusted pupil premium spending to help deal with this.
- Leaders' use of the pupil premium has strengthened careers provision, which has had a positive impact on the numbers of disadvantaged pupils going on to suitable placements at 16. Last year all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, went on to carefully planned destinations at the age of 16 and stayed at these placements.
- Pupils' attendance at school is now above the national average. The proportion of pupils who are absent regularly is below the national average. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is still too low. School leaders know this and have taken

firm action to improve attendance. Leaders' actions have reduced the number of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who are absent regularly from school.

- Leaders know that they have excluded disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities from school more often than leaders nationally exclude school pupils. Governors have been fully supportive of leaders work to reduce exclusions and the impact of this work is clear. The number of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who have been excluded more than once has recently reduced.
- The strong leadership of special educational needs is helping the school improve its support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress with their reading skills; this is helping them to learn more effectively across the curriculum. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making appropriate progress towards challenging targets. However, school information shows that the number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who make progress above their targets at key stage 3 is low. Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work showed that some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities struggle to complete the most challenging tasks set.
- Subject leaders ensure that teaching, learning and assessment are increasingly effective. Middle leaders received support from a school leadership programme, which has sharpened leaders' understanding of their responsibilities and given them the skills they need to do their jobs well. Subject leaders now see themselves as the first line of accountability for the quality of teaching and pupils' examination results. Subject leaders have improved the accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils' work. They have done this by working closely with other schools and the public examination boards. Supported by the school's data manager, leaders make good use of the school's assessment and tracking systems to identify pupils who are falling behind and then support them to improve.
- Middle leaders ensure that training to improve teaching at departmental level is highly focused on developing the skills pupils need to succeed. Leaders have become very knowledgeable about how pupils learn. Outstanding middle leaders contribute to the professional development of others across the school, sharing best practice. Improvements in the quality of pupils' work, and the leaders' records of pupils' progress, show that the actions of middle leaders have a strong, positive impact on pupils' learning. Leaders' work has strengthened pupils' progress in English and science, and is improving the quality of learning in design technology.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to focus on reducing the exclusion and absence of disadvantaged

pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities

- disadvantaged pupils, especially boys, make consistently good progress
- teaching supports pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to make more than the expected progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Ellenor Beighton
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the acting head of school to discuss the school's progress since the last inspection. I held a meeting with middle leaders, where we discussed the impact of their work to improve the quality of teaching. I met with governors to discuss their priorities for improving the school. My colleague spoke to a group of pupils about their safety and what it is like to be a pupil at this school. He also spoke to other pupils during informal times. We scrutinised a variety of sources of information, including the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures, the records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children and the school's own assessment of the progress it is making. We undertook observations of learning activities during the school's enrichment week, and some of these observations were with a school leader. We viewed work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils about their learning during enrichment activities. We made checks on leaders' use of off-site education providers. My colleague listened to Year 7 pupils read. I analysed 104 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parental questionnaire, 99 free-text responses from parents, six pupil questionnaires and 76 staff questionnaires.