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Mr Steven Mitchell
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Mitchell

Short inspection of Parklands High School

Following my visit to the school on 17 July 2018 with Anne Seneviratne, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Philip Wood, 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 November 2014.

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 as headteacher in September 2017, you have created a culture of collaborative leadership. School leaders feel empowered and enthusiastic. They lead their areas of responsibility well and are having a positive impact on outcomes for pupils.

Leaders know the school well. Your accurate self-evaluation has highlighted the schools' strengths and your priorities for improvement. There is an appropriate action plan in place and many changes have already begun. You have responded effectively to the areas for improvement from the last inspection. For example, teachers now make sure that work is more accurately matched to pupils' learning needs.

Leaders use the school's assessment data effectively to gain a comprehensive understanding of pupils' progress in Years 10 and 11. However, they do not use information effectively enough to provide a precise overview of pupils' performance in Years 7, 8 and 9.

The changes made in teaching and learning demonstrate your vision. Leadership of teaching is strong. Senior leaders and subject leaders work together effectively to improve the school. As a result, the improvements in teaching and the curriculum have been swift but appropriate. Teachers are engaged in the process of change and feel valued.

The improvements in the curriculum and learning can be seen clearly in mathematics, where pupils' progress has improved considerably. In other curriculum areas, such as English and religious studies, skilful teaching is enabling pupils to make particularly good progress. However, disadvantaged pupils still do not make as much progress as other pupils.

Pupils' welfare continues to be at the heart of the school's work. I know that you are passionate about equality of opportunity and it was this that led you to develop 'The Linc', a school-based alternative provision facility. This means that the pupils at Parklands who might previously have moved into external provision remain part of the school's ethos and culture. You have successfully supported the small number of pupils that have attended 'The Linc' so far and reintegrated them into the main school.

Governors understand their statutory duties. They ensure that they are well trained so that they can effectively hold you and other leaders to account. They are supportive of the school's leadership and feel that you keep them well informed. Governors visit the school often to ensure that staff see them as an approachable part of the leadership team.

Staff have confidence in you and your leadership team. They appreciate the dialogue that takes place when new strategies are introduced. They are very positive about the school and particularly appreciate the consideration that leaders give to workload when introducing changes to school systems and policies.

Parents and carers are very positive about the school. They are particularly complimentary about your flexibility in response to concerns. For example, parents commented on the way you adjusted the uniform for pupils during the hot weather. They trust school leaders and feel that they respond well to parental concerns. Parents say that their children are happy and safe in your care. They are very appreciative of the many extra-curricular activities available to their children.

Pupils are also positive about their school. They enjoy lessons and extra activities and feel safe. They like their teachers, who they feel challenge them to achieve well. Pupils usually behave thoughtfully in school and the respect that they have for people's differences is strong. Pupils say that bullying is not a problem and on the few occasions when it occurs, it is dealt with appropriately by the teachers.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff receive safeguarding training regularly and know how to identify pupils that may need extra help. Staff show a clear understanding of the school's safeguarding policies and follow the appropriate steps to ensure pupils' safety.

Leaders provide a broad range of strategies to support vulnerable pupils and have made strong relationships with outside agencies to allow them to do this. They work

well with parents and provide a variety of opportunities for them to meet with leaders. For example, on certain days, some leaders go to the local supermarket so that parents who find it difficult to get into school can 'drop-in' and talk over a cup of tea.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They talk confidently about the dangers that they can face online, particularly when using social media.

Inspection findings

- Inspectors were keen to see if teaching across the school is meeting the needs of pupils. Leaders work well with teachers to ensure that teaching matches pupils' needs. Consequently, many pupils make good progress. Teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects engages pupils. Pupils' attitudes to learning are typically good.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils was a key focus for this inspection. You explained the specific circumstances that led to several disadvantaged pupils making significantly less progress than other pupils in 2017. Leaders have a priority to raise the progress of these pupils. Currently, you use assessment data to gain an overview of the progress of pupils in Years 10 and 11. This shows that pupils in these years are making stronger progress than in the past. However, leaders do not know if the progress of disadvantaged pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 is also improving.
- Leaders and the attendance officer are working successfully to improve pupils' attendance at school. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has shown consistent improvement over the last three years. For example, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils that are regularly absent from school reduced in 2017, compared to 2016. Current school data shows that there is a further large reduction in pupils' absences this year.
- Another focus for the inspection was the reasons behind the improving trend in mathematics. The restructuring of the mathematics department has clearly brought about success for pupils. Pupils' work shows that the strong progress that pupils made in 2017 has been maintained. The new and enthusiastic mathematics leadership team has clearly identified actions required for improvement and acted promptly. Pupils are challenged and are engaged by the activities that have been introduced in the school's new curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress made by disadvantaged pupils improves so that it matches or exceeds that of other pupils nationally by the end of Year 11
- they gain a more precise overview of the progress of different groups of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 across subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Erica Sharman
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors examined a range of documents, including: safeguarding records and policies; information on pupils' performance and attendance; and the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan.

We met with you and other members of your leadership team. I met with three members of the governing body, including the chair and the vice-chair.

We observed lessons with school leaders in several subject areas and looked at work in the pupils' books. Together with senior leaders, we also examined the work across a range of subjects of groups of current pupils. We spoke formally to groups of pupils from Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 and informally to others around the school. We observed pupils' behaviour both in and out of lessons.

We reviewed the 668 responses to the pupil survey and the 129 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. We considered the 115 responses that parents submitted to the free-text service. We reviewed the 82 responses from staff to an Ofsted questionnaire.