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Mrs Carole Austin
Headteacher
West Lancashire Community High School
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Dear Mrs Austin

Short inspection of West Lancashire Community High School

Following my visit to the school on 4 December 2018 with Michelle Beard, 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. You have appointed leaders and staff who share your high aspirations for pupils' achievement. Leaders keep the school's focus on making decisions in the best interests of pupils. Staff have a detailed understanding of each pupil's needs. They work closely with parents and carers and support pupils well in developing their independence. Pupils and their families benefit from the dedication and commitment of leaders and staff at the school.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They gain much from the wide range of professional training that they access. Staff now assist the school more to improve. Members of staff explained how they had approached senior leaders with suggestions for new initiatives. They were then encouraged to take responsibility for developing these ideas.

Pupils are proud of their school. They spoke about the quality of the relationships they have with staff. Pupils know that staff will listen to them and are confident that staff will always consider their best interests carefully. They were very clear about the importance of treating everyone with respect; they value the friendships they develop at school. This reflects the words on the school badge: 'respect, achieve, success, friendship'.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to clarify staff roles and responsibilities. This has been achieved through giving teachers more responsibility

for their subject areas. Leaders have also provided training for learning support staff. This has enabled them to have a clearer understanding of their role in the classroom. Consequently, the quality of support offered to pupils in class has improved.

Leaders were also asked to increase the involvement of staff in writing and evaluating the school's improvement plans. This has been achieved through staff training and increased opportunities for staff to contribute to leaders' work. Staff work with leaders to review the impact of changes in the school. This has enabled staff to have a clearer understanding of how the school can improve even further.

Inspectors previously recommended that governors improve the quality of their work. Almost half of the governing body are new to the school in the last year. In the last month, four new members have joined the governing body. New governors have a wide range of expertise. Governors have developed a greater insight into the school's systems and processes relating to teaching and learning. They are keen to ask school leaders questions about the effectiveness of the school's work, but these questions have not been challenging enough.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding procedures are robust and fit for purpose. Leaders maintain high-quality, detailed records of checks on the suitability of staff and governors to work with vulnerable pupils. Staff training is above the minimum required. This results in a culture that places safeguarding at the heart of the school's work.

The leadership team's approach to promoting e-safety is thorough and far-reaching. Leaders monitor pupils' internet usage at school closely. Pupils know how to stay safe online. In addition, there is support for parents to keep their children safe online when away from school. Parents value the training and resources provided for them. A comment typifies their views: 'I wouldn't know where to start, the school's support has been fantastic.' Leaders are vigilant; they identify new risks to pupils and address them immediately.

Inspection findings

- I wanted to know about school procedures for managing behaviour, because some pupils in your school show challenging behaviour. You have introduced improved induction procedures. Staff use individual induction plans to support new pupils to be less anxious when they join the school. You have also introduced an electronic recording system to record incidents of poor behaviour. This enables leaders to analyse incidents, identify trends and assess the success of staff support for pupils.
- Leaders and staff now address those aspects of pupils' behaviour that become serious if ignored. Staff use a wide range of actions to help pupils to control their own behaviour. A parent described the effectiveness of this approach. They explained how they had used the same approach at home with positive results.

During the inspection, it was clear that staff know the pupils well. Staff are adept at meeting individual needs.

- I was also interested to find out how well that staff meet the needs of the most able pupils. Staff have high expectations for pupils to develop independent life skills. There are regular off-site visits to prepare pupils for experiences that they may encounter out of school. In practical sessions, there was clear evidence of appropriate challenge for the most able. For example, during a cooking activity, there was positive challenge for pupils to help them to develop more advanced skills. Occasionally, teachers do not exploit opportunities to stretch pupils' learning, for example an over-reliance on the use of communication symbols when some pupils can read.
- I looked at how well the curriculum in mathematics and English prepares pupils for the next stage of their education. Leaders and staff have made improvements to the curriculum at the school that help pupils to study for higher-level qualifications. Pupils are better prepared to continue their studies on a wide range of courses at local colleges.
- Teachers plan a worthwhile curriculum through which pupils make good progress in academic subjects. Pupils develop essential skills in communication and number that will help them to lead more independent lives.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff challenge the more able pupils sufficiently to encourage them to think more deeply
- governors provide a greater level of challenge to school leaders about the effectiveness of the school's work.

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

Mark Burgess
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you and other leaders. An inspector also met with seven members of the governing body and four members of the school's parent teacher association. An inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority by telephone. Inspectors met formally with a group of pupils and spoke with pupils informally at social times. An inspector met with a group of staff.

Leaders accompanied inspectors on visits to classrooms, where they observed teaching and learning across a range of subjects. They also looked at pupils' work across the school.

Inspectors examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding. They scrutinised a range of policies, leaders' school improvement plan and self-evaluation. Inspectors also checked on the school's website.

Inspectors considered the responses of 18 parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, along with free-text comments. They also took account of 40 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 29 responses to Ofsted's pupils' survey.