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Mrs Elizabeth Hole
Academy Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Elizabeth Hole

Short inspection of Whalley Range 11-18 High School

Following my visit to the school on 19 April 2017 with David Hampson, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in October 2012.

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 other senior leaders have a clear and accurate knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and the areas that need further development. The school has continued to improve since the last inspection because of its effective leadership.

Since becoming headteacher in September 2014, you have provided effective and caring leadership. You have successfully ensured that staff at the school are ambitious for all pupils, and promote the school motto of 'Aspire. Believe. Achieve'. You and other school leaders are relentless in developing a culture of high standards, inclusiveness and personal well-being. Consequently, pupils feel well supported and safe. The school community is highly motivated and positive. Members of staff say they enjoy working at the school. Parents are complimentary about the school's work and pupils are very positive about their school life. As a result, the school is a popular choice for parents and their children when making decisions about their secondary and sixth form education.

Teaching at the school is good and it has improved since the last inspection. School leaders recognise those areas where teaching still needs improvement. They have put appropriate measures in place to ensure this happens. Consequently, most pupils make strong progress. In 2016, the overall progress of the pupils leaving

Year 11 was in the top 10% nationally. However, in some subjects, including mathematics and humanities, low and middle-ability disadvantaged pupils, and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, made less strong progress. Their outcomes are now improving, including in mathematics. This improvement would be even faster if low-ability pupils were provided with challenging work more consistently.

School leaders promote an outward-looking culture at the school. Partnerships with other organisations, such as Deloitte and Alliance Manchester Business School have been developed. These enrich the learning and opportunities for pupils. The school website has been created to share the vision, learning and experience of the school with a global community, including for pupils with families who live outside of the United Kingdom.

Pupils feel safe at school. All the pupils spoken to during the inspection and the overwhelming majority of the 173 pupils who completed the inspection questionnaire said the school is a safe environment. Pupils say bullying is rare and any cases are resolved quickly and effectively. Attendance in 2016 was higher than the national average, and it has remained good this year. The lower attendance of a group of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the persistent absence of some disadvantaged pupils has been accurately identified by school leaders as an area to improve further.

School leaders promote the social, moral, spiritual and cultural curriculum actively. Consequently, pupils develop and flourish through the many and varied activities they participate in. Diversity is celebrated, as demonstrated by the visit of the Lord Mayor of Manchester to the school LGBTQ group at the time of the inspection. There are over four hundred pupil leaders, including a group of pupils who are trained anti-bullying ambassadors. Every pupil in Year 10 participates in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. The level of participation in the recent 'Make Your Mark' youth parliament was exceptionally high.

Teaching and outcomes in the sixth form have improved since the last inspection, including for disadvantaged students. Consequently, the outcomes of students are good and are improving. Disadvantaged students are making good progress in many subjects, including in academic A level studies. However, in a small number of subjects, teaching is not as strong. As a result, students, including those who are disadvantaged, are not taught and supported as effectively.

The school is led very well, including in the sixth form. School leaders have identified accurately the areas that need further development. Consequently, the school has the capacity to sustain its improvement further.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose; records are detailed and of high quality. The safety of pupils is a priority for school leaders and, consequently, the culture of safeguarding is a strength of the school. Staff receive appropriate and regular training, including from external agencies. This provides them with a clear understanding of safeguarding issues. The safeguarding of the small number of pupils on alternative provision is effective. The school's vigilance and high level of expertise in securing the safety of its pupils, including in its Prevent duty, has resulted in school leaders providing training for other schools and organisations at a local and national level.

The measures school leaders take to support pupils in keeping themselves safe are very effective. The pupils recognise and value this. For example, school leaders remind pupils about e-safety every time they use a computer in school, with an online safety message on the computer screen. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe from potential threats to their safety and well-being, including threats of extremism. Pupils are taught how to identify and manage stress, including when they are preparing for or taking examinations. School leaders provide a range of discreet and anonymous ways pupils can report bullying of themselves or others on the rare occasions that it happens. Pupils are aware of these. The overwhelming majority of pupils say they feel safe at school and there is somebody at school they can speak to if they are worried or concerned.

Inspection findings

- The leadership of the additional funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is strong and effective. The SENCO is a member of the school's senior leadership team. Leaders and other staff who work closely with the pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have a clear understanding of the challenges the pupils face. They monitor their progress closely in reaching academic, attendance and other targets and review this on a very regular basis.
- Many pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have good attendance. However, a minority do not and their attendance is not improving rapidly. Consequently, the overall attendance figure for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was in the lowest 10% for pupils nationally in 2016. A personalised attendance plan has been put in place for the pupils this year, which is reviewed regularly. It has resulted in improved attendance for some pupils, but overall their attendance remains low.
- The outcomes of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities were low in 2016. They are improving, especially for those who are middle-ability and those who are in Year 7, Year 11 or the sixth form. The progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who are low-ability or are in other year groups is less consistent. Often, the slower progress is related to activities which are not challenging enough for them.

- Just over half of the pupils at the school are eligible to receive pupil premium funding. The use of the funding to support the progress of disadvantaged pupils is effective. In 2016, the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils were broadly in line with other pupils nationally overall, but were lower in mathematics, humanities and some other non-academic subjects. School leaders have used the pupil premium funding effectively to improve the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils, especially in mathematics, history and geography.
- The overall attendance of pupils is good, including the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. Overall attendance was above the national average in 2016. At present the overall attendance figures for all pupils and for disadvantaged pupils are broadly similar. The number of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent has slightly increased this year. School leaders have identified this accurately as an area for improvement.
- The sixth form is well led. The head of the sixth form is supported effectively by the heads of year 12 and year 13. Outcomes were broadly in line with national averages across a range of level 3 courses in 2016, and above the national average for non-disadvantaged pupils in academic subjects. This good standard of education has been maintained and improved this year, particularly for disadvantaged students who are making even better progress in many subjects.
- The range of subjects offered to students in the sixth form is appropriate and varied. Vocational courses are offered at level 1, 2 and 3. Academic AS and A level courses are also offered. Students who have not attained an A*-C grade in GCSE English or mathematics are given the opportunity to re-sit these qualifications. In 2016, the re-sit pass rate at A*-C in these subjects was well above the national average; this has already improved this academic year. All students complete a high quality and relevant work placement.
- Sixth form students appreciate the quality of the personal development and welfare opportunities they receive. They value the high standard of careers advice they get and the many opportunities they are given beyond their academic studies. For example, the mentoring roles they fulfil supporting pupils in years 7 to 11. Behaviour and attendance in the sixth form are good.
- Sixth form leaders monitor the progress of students regularly. They are aware if students start to fall behind and act quickly to support them. Students value the additional support most teachers give to help them catch up if they need it, including one-to-one mentoring and academic support.
- In a minority of subjects in the sixth form, students, especially those who are disadvantaged, do not receive the strong support they get elsewhere. Consequently, their progress is not as good in these subjects. Students say they are not provided with the same high quality additional materials or one-to-one support that they are offered in other subjects.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils is further improved, so that it is in line with the high levels of attendance of other pupils at the school

- the outcomes of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and of low-ability disadvantaged pupils, is further improved, to ensure greater consistency across subjects and year groups
- the outcomes of students in the sixth form continue to improve, including those who are disadvantaged, by sharing the strong practice of many subjects to ensure further consistency in the quality of learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen Ruddy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

- Meetings took place with you, the executive headteacher, your deputy headteacher, senior leaders, teachers and members of the Trust and local governing bodies.
- Discussions were held with pupils to gather their views on issues including safeguarding, bullying, teaching and careers guidance.
- Inspectors examined a range of supporting documentation such as the school's self-evaluation, the school's improvement plan, attendance records and safeguarding documentation.
- Inspectors considered 37 responses to the online parental questionnaire, 69 responses to the staff questionnaire, and 173 responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors conducted learning walks across a range of subjects and year groups. They were accompanied by school leaders on these walks.
- Inspectors scrutinised the work in pupils' books and by undertaking work analysis with school leaders.
- At the start of the inspection the following lines of enquiry were outlined and agreed with you. They were:
 - Is safeguarding effective? Is there a culture of safeguarding? Do pupils and students feel safe? Are any cases of bullying recognised, reported and resolved quickly and effectively?
 - How effective is the use of additional funding to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities? Are outcomes and attendance of these pupils good?
 - How effectively are school leaders, including governors, using pupil premium funding? Are disadvantaged pupils, including those with low and middle starting points, making good progress in mathematics, humanities and the open element?

- Is leadership of the sixth form effective? Are all students, including those who are disadvantaged, making good progress? Is their curriculum broad and balanced? Is the personal development, behaviour and welfare of students in the sixth form good?