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Mrs Elizabeth Cresswell
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Cresswell

Short inspection of Brighouse High School

Following my visit to the school on 22 March 2017 with Deano Wright, Her Majesty's 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 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 have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, and have developed an ethos of shared professional development and informed accountability. You are not complacent. You are highly ambitious for every pupil and want all pupils to succeed.

During this inspection, you were frank with us regarding where you believe there is still more work to be done –for example, in providing challenge for the most able pupils and in getting teachers to further share good practice. Your evaluation of current pupils' progress and achievement is accurate. Staff across the school told us that leaders encourage, challenge and support them to improve. Staff have regular access to good-quality professional development.

You, governors and senior leaders have high expectations of staff and pupils. It is clear that you are uncompromising in your standards and work to ensure that you meet the needs of individual pupils. Teachers told us that there is a strong sense of 'togetherness' across the school. Pupils told us that they feel part of a caring school community that is fully inclusive with a trusting ethos. Pupils feel valued as learners. They say that they feel safe in school and trust staff to support them with their learning and well-being. Older pupils talked positively about having opportunities to take on responsibility. They support each other well when using the 'Safe space' provision for younger pupils.

Improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils remains a key priority for the school. You are able to demonstrate real progress in this work. However, you still have more to do to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make the progress expected of them in mathematics. Pupils and staff speak openly about the shared intent to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve as highly as other pupils nationally.

Pupils are well behaved. They engage enthusiastically with their learning. Pupils are polite and courteous to each other and staff around the school site. Their conduct when queuing for food at lunch and breaktimes is orderly. Pupils were keen to talk to us about their school. They value the extra-curricular opportunities available to them as well as being able to directly approach teachers who will support them with their learning when they are unsure.

Leaders have addressed the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection effectively. New and improved monitoring and evaluation systems for pupils' progress have impacted positively on learning for pupils. Leaders are held accountable for setting challenging targets and for pupils' outcomes. Students are now making good progress in the sixth form across a wide range of subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your leadership team and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements and records meet statutory requirements and are fit for purpose. All necessary checks are undertaken in the recruitment of staff and new staff are provided with safeguarding training. Records are detailed and of high quality. Staff training is comprehensive and effective. There is a strong safeguarding culture.

Ensuring that pupils are safe and very well looked after is at the centre of everything that the school does. Pupils are taught how to stay safe and they feel safe in school. Pupils are confident that members of staff have dealt swiftly with the rare incidents of bullying that have occurred. The school's 'Learning for life' lessons provide a good programme of personal development, including the dangers of alcohol and substance misuse, staying safe online and all types of bullying. This is supported by external experts who provide advice on additional topics, for example sex and relationships through assemblies and specialist teaching.

Inspection findings

- You, your staff and governors are not complacent. You have reviewed the school's position with insight and, as a result, you have a thorough and robust vision for continuing improvement. Teachers and pupils echo this across the school.

- There is a well-planned quality assurance programme in place throughout the school year to help deliver greater consistency across departments. Teaching is regularly observed and used alongside book reviews and assessment monitoring to identify teaching teams in need of support and those with strengths. Performance management is rigorous and informs the school's comprehensive professional development programme, which is proving effective in improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- Leaders responsible for disadvantaged pupils have correctly identified pupils' barriers to learning. Bespoke strategies focus teachers' attention on this group of pupils, including targeted actions such as teachers' deployment and priority monitoring. Your own assessment information shows that disadvantaged pupils are now making better progress than they have done in the past, especially in mathematics, which has previously been a weak and developing subject. Although some pupils are still at risk of failing to meet their challenging targets, many are 'on track' and some are exceeding their expected progress. Inspectors could see no marked difference in the work in books for disadvantaged pupils and their peers.
- Teachers have targeted their efforts appropriately on supporting vulnerable pupils in Year 11 so that they reach their potential in GCSE examinations. There are also some excellent examples of additional support for Year 7 pupils who need to catch up. In a foundation English lesson, for example, pupils were challenged to read and understand a poem which led to an animated discussion involving the whole class.
- Developing stretch and challenge in learning has been a key focus for your staff training this year. We saw good evidence of the use of these strategies during the inspection, including in science in the sixth form and in a history lesson where pupils were given opportunities to answer challenging questions and develop their extended writing to a sophisticated level. It was clear that pupils were encouraged to develop answers that had the potential to be incorrect with the teacher then reinforcing the key learning points.
- Inspectors noted that boys do not take as much care with the presentation of their work in books, and discussed this with senior leaders who are tackling some boys' attitudes to their work.
- You have developed and introduced a new assessment and tracking system that quickly identifies any pupil's underachievement, allowing you to take swift action when pupils fall behind. Pupils are given intensive support to then allow them to return to lessons and make the progress expected of them. Leaders closely monitor and track the impact of these interventions, and challenge and support teachers to ensure that all pupils are able to make good or better progress. Support for literacy development is particularly strong. Pupils talk about the expectation that all pupils should read six classic novels by the time they reach Year 11.

- You have improved the effectiveness of the 16 to 19 study programme as the sixth form has continued to grow. Students have benefited from improved teaching and, as a result, are making better progress than in the past. Strengths in academic learning and outcomes continue to grow. The school has refined its transition arrangements for students joining the sixth form. Students now choose the most appropriate courses and settle quickly into their 16 to 19 studies.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- they prioritise the work on diminishing any differences between the progress of disadvantaged pupils in mathematics compared with all pupils nationally, so that any gaps in attainment are further reduced
- the level of challenge, particularly for the most able pupils, is increased further through the sharing of good teaching practice more effectively.

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

Yours sincerely

Tudor Griffiths
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors visited the school for one day. They met with you, your leadership team, staff and governors. We also met with pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, both formally and informally to discuss their views about learning. We carried out learning walks to visit lessons with you and the leadership team in a variety of subjects and year groups. Inspectors listened to pupils reading in lessons and one to one with pupils. Policies on safeguarding and child protection, your self-evaluation, development plan, pupil premium and other documents, including governors' minutes and attendance information for current pupils were scrutinised. We took account of the 83 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 48 parent comments, and considered the 72 staff and 110 pupil responses to the Ofsted surveys.