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Mr Joe Sellars
Principal
The Axholme Academy
Wharf Road
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Dear Mr Sellars

Short inspection of The Axholme Academy

Following my visit to the school on 5 July 2017 with Judith Gooding, 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Leaders and governors are ambitious for the school and want the best for all pupils. You, your governors and senior leaders have embraced opportunities to work with external partners and have commissioned a number of external reviews, for example on attendance, improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and safeguarding. Through this approach, you share best practice and act on the review findings, which is ensuring that your school continues to develop and grow. You have successfully created a culture in which your pupils want to succeed. They have high aspirations for their future and you and your staff ably support them to realise their goals.

In the previous inspection, you were asked to develop the quality of teaching and learning further and to focus on the progress of boys. Leaders ensure that there are many opportunities for professional development that are personalised to the needs of your staff. Leaders make regular checks on the quality of teaching through a clear and well-thought-out system of accountability. Performance management is led effectively and teachers know what they need to do to meet their targets, which leaders link to the progress pupils make. As a result, teaching is improving, but leaders recognise the need for greater consistency across the curriculum and across both key stage 3 and key stage 4. Boys' progress has improved over time, but when compared to girls, in English, boys do not perform as well. Leaders are taking action to improve this and are confident that boys are performing better this year.

Pupils in your school feel safe and they are confident that they have someone to turn to if they are facing difficulties. Pupils say that, overall, behaviour is good, and when pupils do misbehave staff deal with it well. You ensure that there is a strong focus on personal, social, health and economic education through your complementary studies programme. Pupils develop skills to help them to manage risk and they learn about British values, other cultures and religions. Pupils value and enjoy these lessons.

Overall, pupils' attendance at your school is above national average. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance, however, is slightly below the national average and persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. Leaders are taking action following the recent attendance review and recognise that there is further work to do to reduce persistent absence for these groups of pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and they record all incidents. All staff have received training in child protection and know what to do should they need to make a referral to the designated safeguarding lead. The designated safeguarding lead ensures that staff are kept up to date with, and implement, the latest guidance on child protection.

Staff are completing training in mental health to be able to offer support for pupils who need it. Following mindfulness training at the beginning of this academic year, a number of pupils have been supported with anxiety issues and have remained in school, learning, due to this intervention. A child sexual exploitation task force has been established among your pupils. They have recently completed their training and are developing a presentation to raise awareness and share their learning with other pupils in your school.

Inspection findings

- Leaders carry out regular curriculum reviews and ensure that pupils' interests and aspirations are at the heart of their planning. They incorporate extra time for literacy development and enhancement into the curriculum for Year 7 pupils, which ensures that these pupils develop their literacy skills well and are prepared for future challenges. Leaders have changed the structure of the school day and the timetable for the next academic year to ensure that pupils have sufficient time to cover subjects in depth and to develop their love of learning further.
- Following the pupil premium review in 2016, leaders designed an intervention programme to accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils. This strategy had a clear impact on the good progress made by Year 11 disadvantaged pupils in external examinations in 2016. Leaders are confident that this will be repeated in 2017 external examinations and are now introducing the strategies to Year 10 as well as Year 11. It is too soon to see the impact for this year group. Leaders recognise that the same rigour needs to be applied to improving progress for

disadvantaged pupils in key stage 3 and in ensuring the same high expectations across different subjects.

- Senior leaders know the school well. They can identify what they do well and what they need to continue to work on. They take appropriate actions to improve the school; however, some evaluations of the effectiveness of actions taken lack detail and so do not always lead to further improvements.
- Over time, girls have achieved more highly in English than boys. Leaders recognise this and ensure that English teachers and leaders promote boys' learning more successfully. For example, by carefully choosing texts to enthuse boys and the introduction of competitive elements in lessons, boys' progress is improving. However, there is still work to do to ensure that boys' presentation improves and their work is more detailed.
- Since the previous inspection, teachers' use of questioning has improved and teaching assistants effectively support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders are taking appropriate action to develop further the quality of teaching and learning in the school. Through rigorous and detailed checks on the quality of teaching and learning, leaders ensure that teachers have personalised provision to develop their skills. Pupils say that they enjoy lessons when teachers are highly engaging and make their learning fun.
- Assessments are appropriate and standardised regularly. Most teachers use this information well to plan learning that meets the needs of all groups of pupils. Teachers also use this information to identify underperformance and then take action to ensure that pupils catch up. Where teachers do this well, most pupils make good progress.
- There are many opportunities for extra-curricular provision. Pupils were very keen to tell inspectors about the range of activities, clubs and trips that they have the chance to take part in. They appreciate that attending these activities helps them to develop their social skills and personal qualities, and supports their learning.
- Governors ensure that there are high levels of accountability across the school. Regular meetings with school leaders provide challenge to improve, and governors are proactive in finding things out about the school's work for themselves.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders regularly evaluate their actions for success, for example in analysing the spending of additional funds for disadvantaged pupils
- the same rigour is applied to the key stage 3 curriculum as the key stage 4 curriculum, so that pupils in all year groups make at least good progress in all subjects
- strategies to improve boys' progress continue, particularly by raising expectations and ensuring that work is detailed and presentation is of a high standard.

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

Yours sincerely

Debbie Redshaw
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, your senior leaders and some of your middle leaders, representatives of the governing body and your pupils. The inspectors gathered a range of evidence from conducting observations of learning and from scrutinising pupils' work jointly with senior and middle leaders. The inspection team checked and evaluated documents, including your child protection policy, safeguarding records, attendance information, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans. Records from governors' meetings, performance management and evaluations of the quality of teaching and learning were also reviewed. Inspectors also took account of 42 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 34 extended responses from parents, 41 responses to the student questionnaire and 35 responses to the staff questionnaire