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Mr Simon Penney
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Penney

Short inspection of Chesterfield High School

Following my visit to the school on 12 April 2018 with Elizabeth Haddock, Ofsted Inspector, and David Roberts, 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 March 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, alongside your leadership team, have created a culture of high expectations. You are ambitious for pupils, students and staff alike. 'For everyone the best' is your mantra. You are committed to ensuring that staff develop professionally. Staff are proud to work at the school and they feel highly valued. Staff benefit from an array of training opportunities.

Leaders' ongoing commitment to staff training as well as opportunities for staff to share strong practice continue to secure developments in the quality of teaching. Teachers have a strong knowledge of their subjects. They have fostered supportive and effective working relationships with pupils. As a result, effective teaching is allowing pupils to make good progress across the curriculum.

Pupils value the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer. They appreciate the opportunity to grow their talents across a range of sporting activities. Pupils also have the chance to take on other worthwhile challenges, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. The majority of parents and carers feel that their children are happy and well cared for by staff. They are confident that their children make good progress.

Those responsible for governance bring to their roles skills and knowledge across a range of sectors, including education and finance. Governors and trustees are

extremely knowledgeable about pupils' progress at the school. This ensures that governors ask pertinent questions of leaders. Governors demonstrate a strong understanding of the school's strengths. For example, they are aware that students in the sixth form make excellent progress in applied subjects. This is particularly the case in sports studies. Governors are also aware which aspects of the school require further development. For example, they are aware that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average for all pupils.

You and your leadership team have an accurate understanding of what aspects of the school require further development. You do not shy away from remedying weaknesses. For example, at the previous inspection, inspectors asked you to improve teaching in academic subjects in the sixth form. You have made a number of changes to develop further the quality of teaching in the sixth form. There have been improvements in the quality of teaching. For example, improvements in teaching are securing better outcomes for students in mathematics, psychology and physics. However, inconsistencies in staffing have hampered your efforts. You acknowledge that the journey of improvement continues in this area.

Inspectors also asked you to improve the quality of teaching in order for the most able pupils to make better progress. Since the last inspection, the progress made by the most able pupils at key stage 4 has improved considerably. This has particularly been the case in science. Where the most able pupils make the most progress, teachers plan learning that challenges pupils to make good progress from their high starting points. This is because teachers use assessment information effectively to plan learning. You acknowledge that the more effective use of assessment information by teachers to plan learning would further benefit the quality of teaching across the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that safeguarding procedures meet requirements. The system to check that all adults at the school are safe to work with children meets requirements. Staff have received appropriate safeguarding training. This means that staff understand the procedures they must follow if they have concerns about a pupil. Leaders follow up any concerns appropriately. Records of leaders' work with external agencies are well organised. Staff and pupils are confident that the school is a safe place. Alternative providers have appropriate procedures in place to safeguard pupils.

Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe as part of the curriculum. Pupils are confident about how to keep themselves safe, including online. Incidents of bullying in school are rare and when they do arise, teachers deal with these incidents effectively. Pupils demonstrate an understanding of different faiths and cultures. For example, they learn in religious education about the negative effects of religious stereotyping. Staff and pupils do not tolerate racist and homophobic behaviour. Pupils and students report that members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community feel free to be themselves.

Inspection findings

- I was interested to know about the rates of absence of disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Leaders have put a number of strategies in place to improve pupils' attendance. Staff ensure that pupils understand the importance of regular attendance. Pupils value the rewards they receive for good attendance. The majority of pupils are rarely absent from school.
- Staff monitor pupils' rates of absence closely. This ensures that staff respond appropriately if they have concerns about pupils' attendance. Rates of absence for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities show sustained improvements. Rates of absence for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are below the national average for all pupils. Leaders remain committed to ensuring that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils increases further.
- I was also interested in the quality of pupils' behaviour. This is because, in the past, the proportion of pupils excluded from school has been above the national average. This has particularly been the case for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders and staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. The overwhelming majority of pupils at the school are courteous and polite. They demonstrate very positive attitudes to their learning.
- The very small proportion of pupils who do have difficulty managing their own behaviour receive help from staff to improve their conduct. Leaders also facilitate bespoke support for pupils from external agencies when this is appropriate. This is ensuring that the proportion of pupils excluded for a fixed period is reducing. The proportion of pupils excluded for a fixed period is now below the national average.
- During the inspection, inspectors focused upon rates of progress made by pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This is because, in the past, those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have made less progress than pupils have nationally. Leaders and governors are already addressing the rates of progress made by pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Leaders provide effective support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities with their move from primary to secondary school. Leaders use additional funding effectively to support pupils to catch up when they join the school in Year 7. For example, where appropriate, pupils benefit from a carefully tailored curriculum at key stage 3. Pupils speak highly about the vibrant special educational needs area that has recently been refurbished.
- Leaders monitor closely the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This ensures that leaders are able to identify quickly those pupils who fall behind in their learning. Staff then provide extra help and support. Leaders ensure that staff understand the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. As a result, additional support provided by staff allows pupils to catch up. School assessment information shows that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making progress that is in line with pupils nationally.

- I was also interested to learn about the breadth of the curriculum. Pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum. Leaders regularly review and refine the curriculum to ensure that pupils have opportunities to follow courses that meet their interests and future aspirations. Pupils explained to inspectors about how they value the broad range of subjects on offer at key stage 4. Leaders ensure that pupils receive appropriate help and guidance from staff to make their subject choices. Pupils value highly the support they receive.
- As part of the curriculum, pupils receive effective careers guidance. As a result, in 2017, almost all pupils continued in education or employment at the end of key stage 4. Pupils appreciate the wealth of extra-curricular activities on offer at the school to complement the curriculum; these include judo, boxing, trampolining, chess and art.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils
- they improve further the quality of teaching in academic subjects in the sixth form
- teachers sharpen their use of assessment information across the school to allow pupils to make even better progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Emma Gregory
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, inspectors met with you and other senior leaders, some teachers and a group of teaching assistants. Inspectors spoke with pupils from key stage 3, key stage 4 and the sixth form. Inspectors also spoke to pupils during learning and at social times. Leaders accompanied inspectors on visits to classes where inspectors observed teaching and learning across the curriculum. Alongside leaders, inspectors looked at work produced by pupils in English. Inspectors also spoke with two members of the governing body and an alternative provider.

Inspectors examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, governance and leaders' analyses of attendance information. Inspectors considered the school improvement plan and leaders' self-evaluation.

Inspectors also checked the contents of the school's website. Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and responses to Ofsted's staff survey. Inspectors also took into account responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text facility.