

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



13 December 2018

Mr Trevor Burton
Executive Headteacher
Millthorpe School
Nunthorpe Avenue
York
North Yorkshire
YO23 1WF

Dear Mr Burton

Short inspection of Millthorpe School

Following my visit to the school on 28 November 2018 with Julian Appleyard, 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 your predecessor 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.

Since the last inspection, you have appointed an experienced head of school, who has a clear focus on the necessary improvement priorities and has been quick to identify any barriers which have the potential to slow progress. The recent focus on pupils' learning conduct has already resulted in an environment across the school where further improvements, with strong and focused leadership, can be made rapidly.

Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They are committed to supporting the school and bringing about any necessary improvements to move the school from good to outstanding. They work closely with the school's leaders and hold them to account effectively.

At the last inspection of your predecessor school, you were asked to improve the quality of teaching further by developing leadership to ensure that pupils improved their work after they have received guidance from their teachers. You have developed a system of checking on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment which involves leaders at all levels. As a result, you can effectively identify where professional support is required for teachers. Any weaknesses in teaching can, therefore, be tackled quickly. Because of these actions, pupils now experience some improvements in the consistency in the quality of teaching across the school and

across subjects. You are aware that there is further work to do, to remove the remaining inconsistencies.

You have identified that mathematics is a weakness and have taken appropriate steps to strengthen leadership of the subject. A recently appointed middle leader has introduced structure and rigour into the assessment processes the department uses. However, more work needs to be done to ensure that the recently introduced assessment methods are applied consistently by teachers, and are used positively by pupils, so that they make even better progress in their learning.

Leaders have an accurate view of pupils' progress through the regular analysis of school progress information. You recognise that the progress of those pupils who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has fallen behind those others nationally who have similar starting points. The focus on these pupils is now a priority and signs of improvement are evident, particularly in the older year groups, and in the provisional results for those pupils in Year 11 who left the school in 2018. However, more improvement is required across all year groups and all subjects, to ensure that those disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, who are not meeting expectations, are both challenged and effectively supported, so that they make better progress.

You have rightly identified that the levels of exclusion and absence for pupils who are disadvantaged or those with SEND have, in the past, been too high. You have applied a range of strategies to combat this trend with some success and have made some improvements. You acknowledge, however, that there remains further work to do to reduce levels of exclusion and absence further.

Many parents and carers responded to Ofsted's survey, Parent View. Their responses were overwhelmingly positive, and they reported that, in their view, the quality of pastoral support and care for pupils was of a very high standard. Some parents raised concerns about the effectiveness of communication between themselves and the school. However, you are working hard to engage with parents in the community, and are using any feedback such as this to improve your practice.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that the arrangements for safeguarding are effective and fit for purpose. Staff receive appropriate and regular training in child protection procedures. They are confident in their understanding of the actions they would need to take if they have any concerns about pupils. The designated safeguarding leader can demonstrate knowledge and experience through the records kept. These records evidence the prompt actions the school takes when safeguarding concerns arise. The school was able to provide documentary evidence of actions it had taken where staff had raised concerns about the safety and welfare of pupils. This evidence reflected a culture of responsibility towards the safeguarding of pupils and a tenacity to investigate safeguarding issues. There is a determination to ensure that the safeguarding of the pupils in the school is high priority.

A small number of pupils access education off-site, attending a local provider. Staff ensure that the appropriate checks are carried out, making sure that these pupils are safe. Any absences are followed up rigorously and pupils' progress is checked against the school's expectations for them.

Without exception, pupils were found to have positive attitudes to their learning in lessons. Pupils were respectful towards teachers and their peers. Inspectors observed no disruption to lessons at all during the inspection. Pupils spoke positively about their experience at the school and reported that pupils show respect and tolerance towards each other. Pupils also spoke positively about the guidance they have been given about keeping themselves safe, and the support and advice staff offer them.

Inspection findings

- Through your accurate self-evaluation and school improvement planning, you have identified clearly the areas of responsibility for leaders at all levels. These plans are ambitious for the school's future and require strong and determined leadership to effect the rapid changes and improvements the school needs to move towards being outstanding. You have the ambition and support of the governors to achieve this.
- After a decline in the outcomes of those Year 11 pupils who left the school in 2017, you were quick to recognise that a fresh approach to teaching, learning and assessment in the school was required. After an initial period of trial, your school approach to establishing improved 'learning conduct' was launched. This has had a significant impact on pupils' attitudes to their learning. The provisional outcomes of those Year 11 pupils who left the school in 2018 suggest that their progress has improved. In addition, you established a focus on the feedback that teachers give to pupils, so that they can improve their work. There is more development of this area of improvement to do, as teachers' approach remains inconsistent. The quality of feedback is variable and, as a result, the progress pupils make by using the feedback, is variable too.
- You have tasked leaders and teachers to raise the expectations of all pupils through their planning in order to stretch and challenge them in their learning. You acknowledge that there remains work to be done in this respect. Inconsistencies remain across subjects; for example, there are areas of strength which exist, but equally there are areas where much development is required. Inspectors observed teachers using probing questions that stretched pupils' thinking. In these cases, pupils responded well to the challenge and deepened their learning and understanding. In other examples, teachers' feedback failed to challenge pupils to respond and make further progress.
- You have rightly identified the progress of those pupils who are disadvantaged as a priority for improvement. Initial indications from provisional 2018 external examination results suggest that improvements are being made. You have, nonetheless, ensured that the progress of disadvantaged pupils remains a high priority. Teachers are provided with detailed pupil profiles to assist them in

identifying the needs of disadvantaged pupils in the classroom, as well as any additional support those pupils with SEND require. Your aim is to ensure that this information assists teachers with their planning, so that pupils meet their expectations, and any who are falling behind are quickly identified and given the support and challenge they need to catch up. However, teachers' use of this important information is inconsistent. As a result, some pupils who are not currently meeting expectations remain behind others, without the support and challenge that is necessary for them to make better progress.

You and leaders have worked hard to reduce the number of exclusions and the levels of absence of pupils who are disadvantaged or with SEND. Both exclusions and absence for these pupils have reduced as a result of the wide range of strategies you have employed. The strategies, for example, include additional support for reading, providing resources, intervention and catch up sessions for pupils who have fallen behind in their work. You have ensured, too, that the school's attendance team is tenacious in its approach to challenging poor attendance and that rewarding good attendance is a feature of the school. The work you and leaders are now embarking upon to engage parents and carers in the learning experience of their child, is a strong feature. You and school leaders have not been slow to review your actions and evaluate their impact when allocating the funds the school receives for those pupils who are disadvantaged.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- classroom-based strategies, which support pupils who are disadvantaged and those pupils with SEND, are further embedded in practice and applied consistently across the school, so that these pupils make better progress
- approaches to providing feedback to pupils is consistent across subjects, and that teachers' expectations of how pupils respond to feedback are consistently high
- the attendance of all pupils, and in particular those who are disadvantaged, remains a focus and improves
- the levels of exclusion of pupils who are disadvantaged, and the levels of exclusion of pupils with SEND, are further reduced.

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

Yours sincerely

Barry Found
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors observed teaching and learning in English, mathematics, science, history, geography, drama and art. Inspectors also observed a paired reading scheme session and pupils' behaviour around the school during lessons and social times.

Inspectors met with you, and senior and middle leaders. I also met with a group of governors, which included the trust principal. Inspectors met with pupils from Year 7 to Year 11 and talked to pupils informally during lessons, breaktime and lunchtime about their views and experience at the school.

Inspectors carried out a scrutiny of pupils' books with the subject leader of Mathematics. We also looked at a range of school documentation, including current assessment information, leaders' school self-evaluation information, records about the behaviour and attendance of current pupils and information about safeguarding.

We took account of 68 responses to the staff questionnaire, 206 responses to Ofsted's online parent survey, Parent View, including 190 written comments by parents, and 31 responses to the pupil questionnaire.