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Mr Malcolm Kelly  
Headteacher  
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Wirksworth  
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Derbyshire  
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Dear Mr Kelly

### **Short inspection of Anthony Gell School**

Following my visit to the school on 2 October 2018 with Stephen Lewis, 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 February 2015.

#### **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 your senior colleagues provide strong and effective leadership and you have built a committed staff team. Your leadership is successfully combining the school's long-standing caring and compassionate ethos with a greater focus on ensuring that pupils achieve in line with their capabilities. Since taking over as headteacher after the last inspection you have established a clear vision and brought about a more aspirational culture. You have ensured that leaders track and monitor pupils' achievements more effectively and plan interventions where appropriate.

While, overall, you demonstrate that you know your school well, your self-evaluation of the quality of some areas is over-generous. The areas you identify that require improvement match those identified by inspectors. For example, you have identified that more needs to be done to ensure that pupils make more progress in some subjects to match the rates of progress reached by pupils in the highest performing subjects in the school. Your detailed plans to address any areas that require improvement are clear and appropriate. Consequently, you are able to improve on the school's many strengths and address its areas of weakness.

Your governors have a clear and detailed awareness of the school's strengths and the areas requiring development and what needs to be done to bring about

improvement. Consequently, they are well placed to provide appropriate challenge and support to you and your leaders.

During the inspection, pupils' behaviour around the school was of a very high standard. Pupils were polite and well mannered. Teachers and pupils have very positive relationships. As a result, pupils behave very well in lessons. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and take a pride in their work. Pupils follow instructions quickly and lessons flow with minimal disruption. Instances of serious poor behaviour are rare and, consequently, exclusions are low. The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, were very positive about the school. Pupils are clearly very happy at the school and said that behaviour seen during the inspection was typical.

Leaders' actions to improve teaching and learning have had some success. Time is usually used well in lessons and questioning is used effectively to probe pupils' knowledge and understanding. Pupils take a pride in their work and appreciate the feedback they get from teachers to help them improve it. Consequently, most pupils make progress in most subjects. However, leaders recognise that there is further work to do to ensure consistency and further improvement in some subject areas.

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed the key lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. These included establishing the effectiveness of leaders' actions to improve the progress of all pupils and, specifically, girls in the sixth form. We looked at the progress you have made in addressing the areas for improvement identified in the school's last inspection. We also considered the extent to which absence is reducing for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Lastly, we checked whether safeguarding is effective. These lines of enquiry are considered below.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

A strong culture of safeguarding exists in the school and you have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Record-keeping is detailed and records are of high quality. You work well with external agencies. There are suitable systems in place to check on the recruitment of staff. Staff and governors are trained and regularly updated on how to keep children safe from abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism. Staff know how to raise and report any concerns they might have.

Pupils and parents agree that the school is a safe place. Pupils also say that the school prepares them well for managing their own safety. Pupils feel listened to and know who to turn to within the school if they have concerns. They told inspectors that your staff deal promptly with rare occurrences of bullying.

## Inspection findings

- Overall, pupils' progress over time in their GCSE subjects has been broadly in line with the national average. Data provided by the school on current pupils, and work seen in books, indicates that current pupils are on track to achieve ambitious targets and make even better progress. However, inconsistencies remain between subjects in the amount of progress being made. Furthermore, girls make significantly better progress than boys and the progress of boys needs to improve.
- Year 13 students in the sixth form made progress in their A-level courses that was broadly in line with the national average in 2017. However, there was a dip in the progress of girls, which was significantly below the national average. The fall was largely due to the underachievement of a small number of girls who did not complete their courses. Action has been taken to address this and 100% of students completed their courses in 2018. Unconfirmed, provisional data for 2018 indicates that girls' progress is likely to be in line with the national average.
- Leaders have also taken appropriate action to help improve teachers' use of information of what pupils know and can do to plan their lessons. Staff now use information about pupils more effectively to organise their classrooms and ensure work meets pupils' needs. As a result, more pupils are appropriately challenged and make better progress. This has led to a higher proportion of pupils and students attaining the highest grades across the range of subjects in GCSE and A level.
- Pupils' attendance and persistent absenteeism (pupils with attendance lower than 90%) has been broadly in line with the national average. However, the pupils with the lowest attendance often have SEN and/or disabilities or are disadvantaged. Therefore, improving attendance of these groups of pupils has been a priority for the school. The school has introduced a wide range of strategies to tackle poor attendance and these are beginning to have an impact. Overall, attendance is rising, and disadvantaged pupils are attending more regularly. Nevertheless, the attendance of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, or are disadvantaged, remains a priority for leaders.

## Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- action is taken to improve the progress of boys so that it more closely matches the strong performance of girls
- work continues to improve the relative underperformance of some subjects, so that pupils' progress is similar to that in the best performing subjects in the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Nigel Boyd  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection inspectors met with you, other senior leaders and governors. Inspectors visited a number of subject areas with your senior leaders to observe teaching and look at pupils' work. They met with groups of pupils. Inspectors scrutinised the school's safeguarding arrangements and records, including the school's record of recruitment checks on staff. They reviewed records about attendance and examined a range of other documentary evidence, including that relating to your ongoing self-evaluation and data on pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspectors considered the views of 140 parents through their responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and Ofsted's free-text service. There were no responses to Ofsted's survey for staff or pupils to consider.