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Mr Ian Sanders
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Sanders

Short inspection of Lakelands Academy

Following my visit with Jacqueline Newsome, Ofsted Inspector, to your academy on 2 February 2016, 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 June 2012.

Since the last inspection, the school has become an academy and is the founder member of the Lakelands Educational Trust.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the academy since the last inspection. Senior leaders and governors have a strong sense of commitment and are striving to further improve the quality of education available to pupils at the academy.

The previous inspection report identified good progress and results above the national average, as a consequence of good teaching overall. The report also identified that pupils have positive attitudes towards learning and outstanding conduct. These features continue to be of high quality in the academy.

However, the previous inspection report directed the school to ensure that teachers' planning enables pupils to receive appropriate support and challenge and make faster progress. The report also directed the school to improve written feedback so that pupils know what they need to do to improve their work. Since the last inspection, leaders in the academy have addressed both of these areas effectively. For example, professional development of teachers in relation to their use of assessment and feedback has resulted in pupils improving the quality of their work. This is, in part, because pupils now receive specific written feedback related to the

objectives of their lessons. Teachers effectively question pupils in lessons, challenging them to think more deeply and develop their understanding further. As a result of these and other improvements, most current pupils in most subjects at both key stages are making good progress.

You ensure that the culture of high expectations about achievement, the quality of teaching and about learning and behaviour are maintained and permeate the culture of the academy. Staff and parents care about the academy and share your ambition for continued development and success. However, academy conversion and the justified and appropriate staffing restructuring created anxiety and uncertainty for some staff and parents. A number of staff said that they would like to understand more the way their views and ideas are used to contribute to the development of the academy.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements and procedures operate properly and promptly. Staff have been appropriately trained in child protection and safeguarding issues. Leaders, staff and governors are well versed in their responsibility to ensure the welfare and safety of pupils. Academy records show that when staff have cause to act, they have done so in an appropriate and timely manner. Academy policies reflect current guidance and requirements. However, staff awareness of changes contained within the most recent versions of some guidance documents could helpfully be raised.

Pupils and parents say the academy is a safe environment and that behaviour around the academy site is good. Pupils told inspectors that they feel staff often deal quickly and effectively with bullying issues. Pupils are taught to respect the views of others, and about cultures and lifestyles that are different to their own.

Inspection findings

- In 2015, at least three quarters of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 made at least the progress they should and more than one quarter made more than the progress expected in English and mathematics as a result of consistently good teaching.
- The standards achieved by pupils who join the academy in Year 7 are broadly average, reflected in the average standards they reach at GCSE. The proportion of pupils who achieved the English Baccalaureate at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2015 compares favourably to national values.
- Leaders have taken effective action to narrow the gap between the achievement of pupils who are disadvantaged and other pupils in the academy and nationally. Information you provided about pupils currently in the academy shows that the gaps between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the academy and nationally are continuing to close.

- Teachers benefit from opportunities to improve their teaching through regular professional development and coaching opportunities at the academy. Leaders' focus on teaching and learning is helping to make sure all pupils gain from the best practice and encourages all teachers to try new approaches to improve their practice.
- Teachers use information well about how pupils are doing and plan lessons which engage and interest pupils. Teachers use a range of techniques appropriate to different age ranges and ability groups and use good subject knowledge well. Pupils are provided with a good level of challenge. Teachers help them to make progress and push pupils towards more demanding tasks.
- Leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the academy's strengths and areas which need further development. Senior leaders evaluate the academy accurately using information from a variety of sources. As a result, plans identify key priorities for further improvement.
- Leaders and staff have introduced an effective marking and feedback policy. As a result, the number of pupils who make the progress expected of them is increasing. The majority of staff are applying the marking and feedback policy consistently. However, leaders do not always take into account teacher problems connected with teachers' engagement with the marking and feedback policy which has slowed its development.
- Governors are highly supportive of the academy and have a good understanding of the quality and impact of teaching and learning. Governing body committees have been restructured resulting in an increased focus on the quality of teaching. Governors use minutes of their meetings effectively to identify key actions and so can readily hold leaders to account. Governors attend meetings at the academy and contribute to extracurricular activities, providing formal and informal opportunities to keep in touch with staff.
- Teachers' performance is rigorously managed. Teachers' targets are challenging and include those based on high expectations of progress made by their pupils. Governors make sure effective teaching is rewarded.
- Pupils' conduct around the site and in lessons leads to a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Pupils are polite, courteous, thoughtful and considerate. The academy has an electronic system to monitor and analyse patterns of behaviour in lessons. The behaviour monitoring system is not always used consistently by staff, so information is not comprehensive.
- Teachers provide excellent opportunities for pupils to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally within lessons and through assemblies. Fundamental British values are promoted well through the world studies faculty and consequently pupils are interested in the diversity of modern Britain. For example, in a religious education lesson pupils were able to draw comparisons between the caste system in India and the British class system. They considered how class discrimination can impact on individuals. However, a recent audit established that fundamental British values are not yet fully embedded across all curriculum areas.

- Leaders were able to demonstrate the effectiveness of the academy's careers education and guidance as the proportion of pupils who do not successfully continue in education, training or employment after Year 11 is below the national average. Although leaders are providing careers guidance to younger pupils who are vulnerable, most careers education and guidance is focused on pupils in Year 11 who are preparing to move on from the academy.
- Attendance is in line with national averages. Leaders can identify legitimate causes of absence for some pupils who have special educational needs or disability and staff are working well to improve their attendance. Leaders are aware that absence rates for pupils who are disadvantaged are higher than for other pupils in the academy and nationally. Strategies are in place to address the low rates of attendance of pupils who are disadvantaged, and these are having a demonstrable positive effect.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- staff are better aware of ways in which their views and monitoring and review of their own and pupils' performance contribute to the further development of teaching and learning strategies within the academy
- strategies to improve the attendance of pupils who are disadvantaged are continually evaluated and prompt action is taken to implement additional approaches
- careers advice and guidance commences earlier during pupils' time at the academy in order for them to make informed choices about their futures.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Shropshire Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rob Hackfath
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we met you and other senior leaders, including the designated lead for safeguarding in the academy. I met with the chair and vice-chair of the local governing body.

Pupils gave inspectors their views on the academy when they spoke to us in lessons and around the academy site at break and lunchtime. We also considered the views of pupils through the 56 responses to the online questionnaire. We joined you and

other senior leaders in short visits to lessons, where we spoke to pupils about their work and looked at their work in books. We spoke to academy staff and also took their views into account through the 78 responses to an inspection questionnaire for academy staff. The views of parents were considered through the 71 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Inspectors evaluated recent information on pupils' progress and scrutinised other records about keeping pupils safe, their attendance and punctuality and their behaviour.