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Tottington High School
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Dear Mr Duffy

Short inspection of Tottington High School

Following my visit to the school on 3 November 2015 with Dawn Platt, Her Majesty's 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Most of the areas for improvement cited in the last inspection report have been tackled successfully and work continues on the others. You lead the school well. In recent years, you have introduced a much sharper emphasis on promoting a culture of improving pupils' progress. Ways of supporting this drive for improvement have now been incorporated into the school's culture and organisation. The leadership team have worked well together to drive this agenda in all subjects and in all year groups.

Teachers have a good understanding of their pupils' learning needs and how best to secure and accelerate their progress and strengthen their aspirations. You have established rigorous self-evaluation which accurately recognises key strengths and areas for improvement. In particular, you have promoted very robust staff appraisal and performance management. Both are now having a positive impact on the progress of current pupils and the school's performance. Effective communication between the leadership team, middle leaders and other staff is ensuring that no stone goes unturned in the pursuit of further improvement.

Comprehensive school information indicates that current pupils are making good progress in all year groups. Checks on pupils' progress and the school's performance are thorough and are used regularly by staff to highlight pupils who need additional support.

Careers guidance is a strength of the school. Governors are both challenging and supportive and know the school very well. Parents are well informed about their child's progress.

An air of purposeful learning permeates the school. Pupils want to learn and to do well; they have strong aspirations and ambitions. Pupils' behaviour is good. They are polite, courteous and inquisitive and enjoy expressing their views. They listen well. In recent years, you have promoted a strong and successful emphasis on pupils contributing their views. This is having an increasingly positive impact on pupil communication skills, their self-confidence and their contribution to school improvement. You have encouraged a very healthy air of competition and endeavour by the formation of a house system. Good relations between staff and pupils enhance this welcoming, lively and developing school community that you lead. You place a strong emphasis on the social and cultural development of pupils. The pupils leave the school as well-rounded individuals with ambition and self-confidence.

You recognise the need to improve aspects of teaching, learning and improvement planning still further. You have a very clear view of where the school needs to improve and how to achieve your shared ambition with staff for it to become an outstanding school.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are effective. Records are detailed and of high quality. Governors monitor safeguarding arrangements effectively. Pupils spoken with said that they felt safe in school.

Inspection findings

- The leadership team has a very strong focus on improving pupils' progress, which they communicate effectively to staff and pupils alike. Staff appraisal and performance management systems are fine-tuned so they have maximum impact on improving teaching and ensuring that pupils make good or better progress. These systems are supported by staff and used well by them to develop their skills as teachers, and as a means of regular reflection on their practice and development needs.
- Teaching and learning have been strengthened since the last inspection. There is a wealth of information to inform leaders and teachers about pupils' progress. Teachers use this information well to plan lessons. Records and checks on pupil progress are good and are used to plan ways to help pupils further. Pupils respond well to challenging and well-planned learning activities. In a few lessons and subjects, however, the most-able pupils are not stretched or challenged to achieve their best.
- Leaders are quick to recognise and tackle weaknesses. For example, the below-average attendance of pupils with special educational needs was quickly recognised in 2014 and action plans speedily implemented. As a result, the attendance of these pupils has improved significantly and is now in line with the high levels of attendance across the school.
- Over the last two years, gaps in progress and attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their peers have narrowed significantly. Additional government funding to support these pupils (the pupil premium) has been better focused on well-designed interventions for individual pupils. Teachers are far better informed and are adept at using school information effectively to tackle gaps in progress and attainment.
- Middle leaders have embraced their accountability and responsibility for pupils' progress and for the quality of teaching and learning within their areas. In some

weaker faculties, the appointment of new leaders is beginning to have a positive impact on teaching and learning, resulting in pupils making faster progress. In resistant materials, a link with a support school has focused on achieving improved outcomes. The leadership team acknowledges that further work is required in some faculties to eliminate variability in the performance of subjects and the effectiveness of improvement planning.

- Current information shows that pupils in Years 10 and 11 are making good progress in English and mathematics. Modern foreign languages, arts and humanities subjects also show improving trends in Key Stage 4. Leaders have identified pupils' slower progress in a few subjects in Key Stage 4 and have action plans in place to tackle this.
- Reading recovery programmes are effective in Key Stage 3. Weaknesses observed in the progress of some pupils in Year 8 were quickly identified and additional arrangements for literacy support were put in place. A strong reading culture pervades the school and many pupils are interested to share their views on their current reading with adults and peers alike.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress.
- The leadership team has developed robust systems to evaluate the quality of teaching and leaders' interventions are starting to have an impact in weaker subjects. While there is no inadequate teaching, some still requires improvement. Leaders also recognise the need to increase further the amount of outstanding teaching across the whole curriculum.
- Pupils spoken to said they felt confident in their teachers and safe in school. Many said that they enjoyed coming to school. A number of pupils in Year 7 spoke positively of their dedicated teaching and play area and how this had contributed to their successful transition to the secondary school. Some parents also supported these comments in their responses to Ofsted.
- Heads of year effectively monitor the welfare and academic progress of their pupils. Excellent support structures and strong links with external agencies ensure that vulnerable pupils make good progress. The introduction of a house system has added a positive and competitive edge to extra-curricular activities and the enrichment curriculum. Fixed-term exclusion rates have been reduced.
- The school has achieved the IAG Gold Standard Award, reflecting its excellent work in careers information, advice and guidance (IAG). Pupils have a very positive attitude towards their next steps in education or the world of work. A very high percentage move on to two outstanding post-16 colleges and thence to university education, other higher education destinations or to the world of work.
- The school has a strong partnership with parents, which is reflected in its parent partnership award. Regular feedback and questionnaires at parents' evenings reveal a thriving and supportive community.
- Governors are provided with clear information to enable them to monitor the school's performance rigorously and they are robust in challenging leaders. Governors are frequent visitors to the school. They are highly supportive and have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and learning, and of the progress of different groups of pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- all teaching is good and more is outstanding
- teachers plan lessons in all subjects that challenge the most-able pupils to achieve their best
- improvements are made in weaker subjects in Key Stage 4 to accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment
- the strong culture of leadership, responsibility and accountability among senior staff is further embedded and extended to all middle leaders and staff.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Bury. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Patrick Geraghty
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- The inspectors undertook four extensive learning walks, accompanied by a senior leader. They looked closely at samples of pupils' written work in a range of subjects and year groups. They observed pupils' attitudes to learning in a wide range of subjects. Inspectors attended an assembly. They observed pupils' behaviour at break and lunchtimes and spoke with many pupils around the school campus.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders and two groups of pupils. Inspectors met with the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors. They considered a wide range of documentation including: self-evaluation and development plans; information relating to pupils' attainment and progress; information on attendance; documents and records about behaviour and safeguarding; records of checks on teaching and learning, and of teachers' performance management.
- Twenty-five parents responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and inspectors considered their views. Inspectors also reviewed the school's own records of feedback from parents and pupils. They also took account of the responses to a questionnaire from 16 staff.