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Dear Mr Whitaker

Short inspection of Settle College

Following my visit to the school on 21 May 2019 with Louise Greatrex, 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 November 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment as headteacher in November 2018, you have led the school with vision, vigour and a real sense of moral purpose. Working with staff and governors, you have quickly and effectively established a culture and ways of working that have helped address the uncertainties that had led to a dip in the quality of some aspects of the school's work. Because of your actions and approach, the school is very much back on track and making strong progress.

Pupils study a broad and interesting curriculum. You have devised a programme, particularly in key stage 4, that develops pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding across a wide range of subjects, including, for example, music and art. This curriculum is supported by a wide range of extra-curricular activities and trips, open to all. You check the quality and impact of the teaching of the curriculum very carefully to ensure that pupils make the progress that they should. You involve your middle and subject leaders in this. As a result, there is increasing clarity and precision in the follow-up work that you and other leaders undertake with members of staff to further improve the quality of their teaching. Teaching staff value the training that they are given to improve their skills. They particularly welcome the opportunities they have to visit and work with other schools because it helps them develop their skills and check the accuracy of their judgements.

The school's previous inspection in November 2015 identified the need to develop the skills of subject leaders so that they can play a fuller part in improving the quality of the work of the school. You have addressed this aspect very effectively.

Subject leaders are enthusiastic, knowledgeable and skilled. They work together and with their teams to share good practice and they are both strategic in their planning and accurate in their analysis of how effective their teams are. You and members of the senior leadership team support these colleagues effectively. You encourage middle leaders to work with other schools, both primary and secondary. Because of this, middle leaders are increasingly confident that the judgements they make about the quality of teaching and its effect on pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are accurate. As a result, the overall quality of teaching is good and improving.

Pupils feel safe and enjoy school. Relationships between adults and pupils and among pupils are cordial and open. This means that there is an atmosphere of mutual respect and care in the school. This has a very positive impact on learning and pupils' progress. Pupils have noticed the improvements in behaviour at the school. They are also clear that these improvements are the result of consistent and carefully planned actions by you and your staff, rooted in an emphasis on mutual respect and care. This attitude is very evident in the classrooms inspectors visited. In these lessons, learning moved on swiftly because pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), felt at ease and knew that their views would be taken seriously. Pupils want to learn. Teachers encourage pupils to develop and deepen their knowledge, skills and understanding through deft, and often demanding and searching, questioning. Pupils, especially the most able, rise to this challenge.

The presentation of pupils' work in their books and folders is not as consistently good as it should be in all subjects across the school. This is particularly the case for boys. While, overall, pupils' books show good progress, poor, unclear and untidy presentation in some books is adversely affecting the usefulness of pupils' books as tools for revision and revisiting knowledge.

The provision for pupils with SEND is effective and increasingly well led. These pupils are carefully supported both in class and in smaller group settings. Their progress is regularly monitored, and their parents are fully involved. Links with outside agencies and support beyond the school are strong. As a result, these pupils make generally good progress from their starting points. The leader of SEND is relatively new in post. She recognises that there is yet more to be done to ensure that these pupils receive, consistently, the very best service. She has moved promptly to ensure that the support for pupils with SEND is accurately focused on their particular needs. She is also developing the skills of teaching assistants so that they are better placed to play a fuller role in developing resilience and independence as learners for pupils with SEND.

You have worked diligently to improve attendance at the school. Historically, attendance has been an issue. Because of your actions and those of your staff, supported effectively by governors and officers of the local authority, attendance is improving and is close to the national average. You have supported parents and carers in understanding the importance of regular attendance on pupils' safety, well-being and outcomes through targeted conversations and events at the school.

You and your staff are tenacious in engaging with the parents of the small group of pupils whose attendance is still not yet good enough.

The sixth-form provision is effective and well led. Leaders ensure that the subjects, guidance and other experiences on offer to post-16 students focus on what these young adults need to be well prepared for their next steps in learning, training or employment. You and your sixth-form team work imaginatively to make sure that, as far as is possible, sixth-form students follow the course combinations of their choice. Your flexible and targeted approach to curriculum helps facilitate this. Sixth-form students are given opportunities to take on responsibilities and further develop their independence. The sixth-form learners with whom inspectors spoke were fulsome in their praise of their teachers and the time and effort staff put in to support, care for and challenge them.

Governors know the school very well. They have steered the school successfully through some uncertain times. They are clear about its place in the local community. They are also very aware of the particular challenges that a relatively small, rural school faces. They have developed a wide range of effective strategies that ensure that they are accurate in their judgements of how well the school is doing. These include regular visits and strong, informed links with middle leaders. Governors have been well supported by the local authority in their work.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have established a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. You, all staff and the governing body take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. You ensure that regular, effective training is provided for all staff and governors. As a result, they are up to date in their understanding and knowledge. You and your designated safeguarding leads have forged strong and effective links with outside agencies. The records of your dealings with these agencies are detailed and show your single-minded approach to this vital aspect of the school's work. You engage with the local authority promptly and follow up safeguarding issues rigorously.

The progress, well-being and safety of the very small number of pupils who attend off-site learning are very carefully and regularly monitored.

You ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are meticulously kept and are of high quality.

Inspection findings

- Teachers are knowledgeable and skilled. They know their pupils. They monitor their progress carefully. This includes those who are most able, disadvantaged and those with SEND. They use the information they gather to inform pupils' next steps and address misconceptions. Inspectors saw examples of teachers using focused questioning effectively to deepen and extend pupils' learning. Because of the work and attitudes of teachers, pupils are keen to learn. They enjoy lessons and take pleasure in learning. For example, a Year 8 pupil was able to tell me, in

detail, and with some relish, how the human circulatory system worked. He had last studied this topic in December 2018.

- Behaviour is, generally, good. The small minority of pupils who, for one reason or another, find sustained, good conduct testing are carefully but firmly handled through the humane and consistent actions of staff. The school's counsellor works effectively with some of these pupils. I spoke with a number of pupils who had additional support with their behaviour. They said that it had helped them in their attitudes and approach. They were appreciative of the efforts that the school had gone to help them.
- The learning environment across the school is attractive and inviting with many displays and celebrations of pupils' work. There are also helpful learning walls that underpin learning and give pupils ready access to information about the topic at hand. There are also displays that remind pupils of the world beyond Settle and their place as citizens of it. There is no litter.
- Disadvantaged pupils make generally good progress. This is because staff know them well and are fully aware of and seek to address the barriers that may lie in the way of their progress. Staff lesson plans contain additional detail about the ways that they will support and challenge disadvantaged pupils. Leaders and governors ensure that disadvantaged pupils have full access to the wide range of extra-curricular activities and trips that underpin the school's formal curriculum. This is a strength of the school.
- Leaders' planning of the provision offered by the school to learners in the sixth form adapts well to the changing needs and aspirations of students at the school. Leaders ensure that, as far as is possible, students can follow the combination of courses that suits their current strengths and future aspirations. For example, the school has developed strong and effective links with a local independent school so that students from the school are able to study particular subjects there.
- The presentation of some pupils' work in their books, especially boys, is not good enough. Weak and inconsistent presentation is having a negative effect on pupils' books' usefulness as sources of information and tools for revision. This is particularly the case in key stage 3.
- Although improving because of effective action by leaders, overall absence is still too high. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is also still too high. However, the tenacious actions of staff and of the recently appointed attendance officer are having a very positive effect on the attendance of those pupils who, for a range of reasons, find regular attendance challenging.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school continues its rigorous and focused work to improve attendance by supporting the families of pupils who find regular attendance at school a challenge

- the school continues to develop its work to support pupils with SEND, especially through the further focusing of the work of teaching assistants so that they play a fuller role
- the school addresses the minority of pupils who do not pay full enough attention to ensuring that the work in their books and folders is well presented.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Evans
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you and other members of your senior team to discuss the school's effectiveness and what you have done to ensure that the school continues to improve. An inspector also spoke with the recently appointed special educational needs coordinator. I met with four governors, including the vice-chair of the governing body. I also met with a group of subject leaders and with colleagues responsible for attendance and behaviour support.

Inspectors read a wide range of documents supplied by the school, including your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I also scrutinised the school's safeguarding systems, records and related documents. I checked information about pupils' progress along with evaluations of aspects of the school's work undertaken by the local authority. I also read minutes of recent governors' meetings.

In almost all cases accompanied either by you or your deputy headteacher, inspectors visited 16 classes to observe teaching. We checked pupils' progress in their books and folders. We talked formally with groups of pupils from Years 7 and 10. We also talked informally with a large number of pupils both in lessons and around the school at lunch, breaktime and the end of school. We also spoke informally with groups of students from Years 12 and 13.

I considered the 73 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 67 free-text comments from parents. I also considered 34 responses to the staff questionnaire and 74 to the pupil questionnaire.