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Ms Emma Sims
Head of School
Meden School
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Dear Ms Sims

Short inspection of Meden School

Following my visit to the school on 4 October 2017 with Ofsted Inspector John Edwards, 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 May 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 your appointment at the start of last school year, you have established a clear vision for the school. You have also brought about a more aspirational culture. You believe strongly in empowering staff and pupils to do their best. As a result, there is a strong ethos of community at Meden School. You have successfully maintained and developed the school's strengths. A particular strength is the high quality of the sixth form. A good sign that your leadership has had an impact is the increased popularity of the school. Considerably more pupils joined Year 7 in September 2017 than previously. More students also stayed on into the sixth form.

You have high expectations and are not complacent about what needs improving. The vast majority of staff, pupils and parents have a positive view about the direction in which the school is heading. They recognise the considerable improvements you have made in the last year. You, other leaders and the governing body hold all staff to account rigorously.

Leaders, including governors, have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. You have planned carefully for the school's future development. You rightly acknowledge that disadvantaged pupils are still not making fast enough progress, despite improvements. Disadvantaged pupils are also absent from school more often than other pupils. They also get excluded from school more often. You

are determined to tackle this and have appointed a new leader for disadvantaged pupils. You have also commissioned a review of the school's use of the pupil premium. Many of the actions taken have been recent and so the school has not yet seen their full impact. Previous actions to support disadvantaged pupils have led to some improvements. Progress is faster, attendance has risen and the number of exclusions has reduced. You, other leaders and the governing body are clear that the pace of change is not fast enough and that further improvements are needed.

Safeguarding is effective.

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. Suitable systems are in place to check on the recruitment of staff. You make sure all staff are trained and regularly updated on how to keep pupils safe. These measures cover protection from abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism.

Pupils say that they feel safe and 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.

Inspection findings

- New members of the governing body mean that it now provides you with more effective support and challenge. Governors have a much better understanding of assessment data than previously. As a result, they provide you with critical challenge. They recognise that they have a key role in ensuring that disadvantaged pupils make better progress, attend more and get excluded less.
- You have responded well to the areas for improvement from your last inspection. The quality of teaching in mathematics is better. As a consequence, pupils are now making faster progress than the national average. In mathematics lessons, pupils are highly engaged in their work. Teachers plan activities well to ensure that the work matches pupils' abilities.
- Leaders have improved the quality of teaching throughout the school. Teachers now share their ideas and work collaboratively to improve their practice. Your approaches are being used across the trust. You and the trust also provide effective support and coaching for teachers whose practice is not as good as it should be. Pupils' books show that this improvement is being sustained.
- As a consequence of the actions you have taken, the quality of learning is consistently good throughout the school. In lessons, teachers have high expectations. They plan tasks that have a high level of challenge and encourage pupils to participate well. Teachers use questioning effectively to probe pupils' knowledge and understanding. Pupils' attitudes to learning are extremely positive and they want to do well. Teachers provide them with very useful feedback that enables them to improve their work.
- Pupils are making good progress. Pupils made faster progress and raised their attainment at the end of Year 11 in 2016. With the exception of English, these

improvements were sustained in 2017. Even so, disadvantaged pupils have not achieved as well in their GCSE examinations as other pupils nationally. Assessment information and the work seen in the books of current pupils show an improving picture in all year groups. Pupils are on track to achieve their ambitious targets.

- In 2016, you excluded a significantly higher proportion of pupils than the national average. You have introduced many strategies to reduce the number exclusions and these have had a positive impact. The number of exclusions reduced considerably last academic year for all groups of pupils. Even so, you still exclude a greater proportion of disadvantaged pupils than of their peers.
- Most pupils attend school regularly and overall attendance has been close to the national average in recent years. Too many disadvantaged pupils, however, are absent frequently. Consequently, leaders have given high priority to improving attendance for this group. Your carefully targeted interventions are beginning to have an impact. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has started to improve. A minority of disadvantaged pupils, however, still do not attend often enough.
- Teachers and pupils have very effective relationships. As a result, behaviour in lessons is good and pupils are keen to learn. Pupils take pride in their work and appreciate that their teachers help them to improve it.
- The vast majority of pupils who spoke with inspectors felt that bullying at Meden School was rare. Those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire agreed. Pupils said that if bullying did happen, staff dealt with it swiftly and successfully. The school's own records on bullying corroborate this. They show that the school's actions are effective when dealing with incidents of bullying. A small number of pupils were concerned that low-level bullying does not always stop following staff intervention.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they use pupil premium funding more effectively to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, help them to make faster progress and reduce the number times they are excluded.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the Nova Education Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Nottinghamshire. 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, governors and representatives of the trust's executive board. Inspectors visited a number of subject areas with you and other senior leaders to observe teaching and look at pupils' work. They had formal meetings with groups of pupils from all year groups, including a group of disadvantaged pupils. Inspectors scrutinised the school's safeguarding arrangements and records, including the school's record of safeguarding recruitment checks on staff. They reviewed records about exclusions and attendance. They examined a wide range of other evidence, including the school's ongoing self-evaluation and data on pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspectors considered the views of 16 parents through their responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and Ofsted's free-text service. They considered 103 responses to Ofsted's survey for pupils and 46 responses to a survey for staff.