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Mr Carl Atkin
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Dear Mr Atkin

Short inspection of The Brunts Academy

Following my visit to the school on 22 March 2017 with Ofsted Inspector Ian Colling, 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 April 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your vision is to open minds, creating opportunities for all to believe in themselves, achieve their potential and develop the skills needed to succeed and enjoy life. The academy is a warm and welcoming place. With the support of the Chief Executive Officer for the trust, you have developed an academy that knows its pupils well. As a result, staff feel valued, pupils are increasingly confident and teaching is good.

At the last inspection, inspectors asked you to focus on improving teaching and outcomes for the sixth form. Since that time, there have been many changes to the secondary curriculum and assessment systems. Nevertheless, you have maintained the standards necessary and, in some parts of the academy, achievement has improved further. For example, the outcomes in mathematics at GCSE are consistently good. Students in your sixth form achieve well.

You place great importance on ensuring that the quality of teaching is at least good. The governing body have been very effective in helping you check that leaders in charge of subjects are improving the quality of teaching. Staff at all levels told me that they are proud to work for the academy and they appreciate the focus you place on developing their skills. You have plans in place to develop teaching further, particularly regarding questioning and challenge. The pace of this improvement needs to accelerate.

You are ably supported by a much changed senior leadership team. Some of them are relentless in their work to improve the outcomes for all pupils, especially disadvantaged ones. They are ensuring that ideas like the 'Future Me' employability skills approach are routinely being used by teachers to help prepare pupils for their next stage in life. We saw some of these skills being taught well by some very enthusiastic teachers in Year 11. You rightly agreed that some leaders need to check their own work more regularly, so they can act quickly to make the right changes.

The learning we saw in different subject areas was well organised. Pupils followed the academy's uniform policy and behaviour was good. You have worked with the trust and governors to make The Brunts Academy a place that is safe and caring for a range of pupils with different needs. For example, setting up buses and appointing support workers has helped improve the attendance of many groups of pupils. You rightly pointed out that more work needs to be done to ensure that even more pupils attend well so they can enjoy the good teaching in the academy.

You have trained leaders at all levels to make sure they are insisting on quick improvements from their teams. Leaders in English have worked effectively to develop their staff so that teaching improves. The number of disadvantaged pupils making expected progress in English in the current Year 11, is much higher than in previous years. You rightly want leaders in English to make sure teaching continues to improve across the academy.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding and the welfare of pupils are of utmost importance at The Brunts Academy. You ensure that all the appropriate vetting checks take place before an adult works at the school. Your records are well organised and detailed. You make referrals to the local authority if necessary and you work closely with parents and a range of agencies to keep pupils safe. Staff and governors have received the most up-to-date training and can speak knowledgeably about issues relating to safeguarding pupils.

Pupils say they feel safe in school. They told us that bullying was rare and that they would have a trusted adult to talk to if they had concerns. One pupil commented that 'This is a much improved school.' Parents felt their children were safe. You offer sessions for families so they can learn about online safety, and you provide further information on the school website.

Inspection findings

- The regular meetings you have with senior staff and governors to check the on the work of leaders in charge of subjects are effective. Staff agree that these meetings are very helpful in improving teaching. As a result, the gap between the progress of disadvantaged groups and others is diminishing. You have identified that all subject leaders also need to be checking their own work even more regularly so they can be confident it is helping pupils improve.

- The attendance team have worked effectively with pupils and parents. Attendance for the academy is now higher than average. However, you have identified there is more to be done to further improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.
- You have implemented a system to plan and then track the impact of the professional support teachers receive. Leaders keep a close eye on how well staff in their teams are doing and this is improving the quality of teaching. However, you rightly identified the need to concentrate on how well teachers use questioning in lessons, so that all pupils are encouraged to think deeply about their learning.
- You have been supported well by governors and the trust to make changes to staff roles to improve teaching and learning. Leaders new in their roles are very passionate about supporting all pupils. Your pupil premium strategy is now making a positive impact on provision for those pupils whose progress is quickening.
- In 2016, results overall at GCSE were at national average in most subjects. However, outcomes for disadvantaged groups were lower. The academy's internal assessment information shows that the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers is diminishing.
- During your tour of the academy with inspectors, we saw older pupils using feedback from the teacher to make quick progress. In a sixth-form practical lesson, students were able to talk to us confidently about their projects and how they will improve them. Younger pupils showed politeness to each other while working in teams to solve problems around volcanoes.
- Your success in improving outcomes in English has been notable. The new leader is passionate and determined. She has made some well thought out decisions to improve the quality of teaching in the department. In the past, English outcomes have been below average, but when we looked closely at Year 11 pupils' work, it was clear that they are now making good progress and their attainment is improving.
- Leaders across the academy who are responsible for behaviour work with determination to ensure that all pupils can learn. The number of exclusions has declined over the past year because pupils respond to sanctions and rewards.
- Your choice of subjects for pupils to study is well thought out. Leaders plan carefully so that pupils can opt for a range of subjects at GCSE level so that they can be successful in their next stage of work or education. Pupils who have left the academy are now all in education, work or training. In the sixth form, the number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds going to university has doubled since 2015.
- The progress for boys and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved because your pupil premium strategy has made an impact. Your own tracking information showed how gaps are diminishing quickly in the current Year 11.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching improves further by challenging all pupils in lessons with work that allows them to make better progress
- teaching improves by embedding effective questioning to make pupils think about their learning
- the work on improving attendance is developed further so more disadvantaged pupils attend
- all leaders consistently evaluate their work promptly so that pupils make better progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Harkireet Sohel
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I met you, the Chief Executive Officer for the trust, representatives of the governing body, a subject leader and a group of staff. Meetings were held with senior leaders in charge of attendance, behaviour and safeguarding, as well as those responsible for the curriculum and pupil premium strategy. Inspectors spoke formally with a group of pupils. Inspectors considered 134 views of parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. Inspectors also considered 72 responses to the inspection questionnaire for school staff. A range of documents and policies were reviewed, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans, plus information about the pupils' performance.