

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mr Martyn Sibley  
Headteacher  
Tadcaster Grammar School  
Toulston  
Tadcaster  
North Yorkshire  
LS24 9NB

Dear Mr Sibley

### **Short inspection of Tadcaster Grammar School**

Following my visit to the school on 14 March 2017 with Michael Maddison, 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 May 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since your appointment in September 2014, you have taken action to strengthen and develop the roles of senior and middle leaders, improve the behaviour policy, review the provision for disadvantaged pupils, improve the quality of teaching and learning, and develop partnerships beyond your school. Through these actions, you have strengthened provision and your school remains a good school. Your mantra of, 'every student, every grade in every subject' means that all staff and pupils are aiming high.

Pupils enjoy learning at your school. They trust you and your staff to help them and support them if they need help. Pupils told inspectors that most of your staff are good at tackling bullying when it happens. Pupils overall have positive attitudes to their learning and they want to do well. Pupils in Year 7 and pupils who have transferred to you part-way through a school year say that they have been able to settle in well and make friends easily. Pupils in key stage 3, however, say that they would value more careers advice and guidance.

The previous inspection report highlighted that the school needed to improve the quality of middle leadership and the way teachers use pupil information in their planning. You have fully embraced this and have a strong set of middle leaders who take full responsibility for pupils' progress in their faculty areas. Your data and information systems have improved so groups of pupils are carefully tracked in all year groups. The result of this is that you swiftly identify those who fall behind and enable them to catch up. Pupils therefore, overall, make good progress.

Teaching and learning are effective and continue to improve. This is because you provide numerous opportunities for staff development. Internally, your 'teacher learning communities' carry out their own research into what works in your school. Good practice is shared and incorporated across the school. Working alongside the Yorkshire Teaching School Alliance has provided more opportunities to develop teaching, and staff embrace opportunities to improve.

Through our discussions and your own evaluation of your school, you identified that although progress and attendance are beginning to improve for disadvantaged pupils, there is still further work to do to ensure that disadvantaged pupils, in Year 11, achieve as well as their peers from the same starting points.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are robust and fit for purpose. Leaders keep well-documented records, which clearly evidence work carried out to support pupils. Records are of a high quality and well ordered.

You have created a culture in your school that ensures that pupils feel cared for and that they are able to seek help and support from adults if they need to. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in your school. You have key staff in place to support vulnerable learners, including a recent appointment of an educational psychologist, and this is helping them to improve their progress and develop skills that they need for life beyond school.

Governors ensure that they regularly meet senior leaders about safeguarding. Through this, they have a strong knowledge of safeguarding in your school and are able to provide you with support and challenge.

## Inspection findings

- A focus for this inspection was to check that school leaders are ensuring that pupils who are disadvantaged and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are being challenged and supported to make the same progress as their peers. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress because work is appropriate and specialist teaching assistants support their achievement. Disadvantaged pupils are making better progress since the beginning of the academic year but there is still work to do, particularly with disadvantaged pupils in Year 11, to ensure they achieve well.
- Inspectors looked carefully at the curriculum. Leaders have increased the time for teaching English and mathematics to ensure that all pupils develop the basic skills needed to achieve highly in their external examinations. Through pre-option interviews, leaders ensure that Year 9 pupils select GCSE subjects that stretch and challenge them. Increasing numbers of pupils are opting for a full range of subjects included in the English Baccalaureate measure.
- Leaders in charge of vulnerable learners implement a variety of strategies to improve attendance and this is having a positive impact. Attendance for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved and is close to the national average. Attendance for pupils who are disadvantaged remains below the national average but is improving.
- Leaders implemented a new behaviour policy in September 2015, which has raised behaviour expectations. The system allows a more detailed analysis of behaviour incidents. Leaders recognise that there is still work to do in evaluating the success of the policy as some pupils feel that some teachers have an inconsistent approach to managing behaviour and some teachers feel that they could be better supported by senior leaders.
- Overall, current pupils are making good and better progress. Leaders and teachers set aspirational targets for pupils and they work hard to achieve them. Teachers effectively use information about pupils' prior attainment to plan learning that challenges them to think hard, and consequently, pupils achieve well.
- Inspectors focused on sixth-form provision during the inspection. The appointment of a permanent sixth-form leader has led to an accurate evaluation of the strengths and areas for development in the sixth form. For example, she is taking action to improve the progress of students who enter the sixth form with lower starting points and these students are now making progress in line with their peers. She recognises that there is still work to do to improve further, for example, providing better careers advice for students wishing to follow a career path that does not involve university.
- Leaders have raised the profile of their anti-bullying messages in school. Through this, pupils are now more confident to report their concerns. Staff, pupils and most parents indicate that the school deals well with any incidents of bullying.

- Governors and the local authority school improvement partner provide effective challenge to school leaders. Regular reviews help leaders to evaluate their actions and decide on next steps. Through their work in collaboration with you and senior leaders, robust action plans are implemented which are leading to improvement.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improving the progress and attendance for disadvantaged pupils remains a priority so that outcomes improve for this group of pupils
- they further analyse and evaluate the standards of behaviour in the school to ensure a more consistent approach to behaviour management and rewards
- the provision for personal, social, health, citizenship and economic education is reviewed and strengthened, so that sixth-form students have more access to health and personal education and pupils in key stage 3 have more access to citizenship and careers provision.

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

Debbie Redshaw  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors met with you, your senior leaders and some of your middle leaders, governors, including the vice-chair of the governing body, your school improvement adviser and your pupils. We gathered a range of evidence from conducting learning walks jointly with your senior leaders and we carried out a work scrutiny. The inspection team scrutinised and evaluated documents, including your child protection policy, safeguarding records, school self-evaluation, school improvement plans, minutes from governing body meetings, evaluations of the quality of teaching and learning, performance management information and attendance information. Account was taken of 210 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 199 responses to the pupil questionnaire and 89 responses to the staff questionnaire.