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Mrs Ella Brett
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Dear Mrs Brett

Short inspection of Ruskin Community High School

Following my visit to the school on 6 March 2019 with Rachel Cave, 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 June 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. During this time, the school has grown in size and is now oversubscribed in years 7, 8 and 9. This is as a result of the good reputation that Ruskin has developed in the local community and beyond. Parents are keen to send their children to this school. They recognise that pupils make good progress and are well cared for during their time in the school.

Together with governors, leaders and staff, you create a warm and welcoming environment where expectations are high and pupils are challenged and nurtured. An inclusive ethos permeates the school. This is evident in the way in which staff and pupils welcome a high proportion of pupils who enter the school mid-year, from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures. The harmony and respect in the school are palpable. Pupils welcome newer pupils with openness and friendship. Parents and carers are positive about the school. The vast majority of parents say that the school is well led and managed, and that their children are well taught and are happy at the school.

Pupils also speak very positively about school life. They are happy, feel safe and are keen to learn. They behave well around the school, showing good manners and respect for staff, pupils and visitors alike. Pupils look smart in their school uniform. They said that they value the support that they get from staff.

Staff are proud to be part of the team at this school. They said that the school is calm, orderly and aspirational for all pupils. Staff told inspectors that the school is

well led and managed and that they enjoy working at the school. Inspection evidence supports their views. You work closely with the local authority to continue to improve the school. Together with the local authority, you also ensure that those who join the school part way through the school year do so with high-quality academic and pastoral support.

You, senior leaders and governors have addressed effectively the areas for improvement which were identified at the previous inspection. Staff have worked hard to improve pupils' attitudes to homework across all subjects and all year groups. Homework is embedded successfully as a part of school life. Homework is used purposefully to consolidate learning and develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of the topics covered in class. Teachers carefully plan activities to support pupils' learning at home. They give pupils the opportunity to address any questions in class before completing the homework. Support is available for pupils who need help in organising their time and prioritising it, so that they become more successful in this important aspect of school life.

Inspectors also identified the need for pupils to develop skills to take fuller responsibility for their own learning. You have taken effective action in this area, through developing pupils' ability to learn independently. You ensure that pupils have dedicated spaces in school in which to work and revise. Pupils are taught how best to revise. Parents are also involved in supporting their children with this. Year 11 pupils benefit from regular mentoring sessions with senior staff, who provide individual guidance and support. Leaders are also engaged in a research project with an external foundation to improve pupils' revision in science. This is having a positive effect on pupils' learning.

In response to inspectors recommending that leaders ensure that good practice is shared across the school, leaders facilitate regular staff training which is led by Ruskin staff. Subject leaders work closely together to share good practice and try out new strategies which have worked well for others in the school. All staff have the opportunity to observe a colleague teach. There is an open environment around the school. This encourages teachers to open up their classrooms and share strategies with others. As a result, teachers regularly discuss teaching and learning. They work together well to continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning across departments and also more widely.

Safeguarding is effective.

All safeguarding records, documentation and procedures are compliant and fit for purpose. Leaders ensure that staff are well trained and that those responsible for safeguarding and recruitment have appropriate and recent qualifications.

Pupils said that they feel safe and happy in the school. Parents and staff agree. Inspection evidence also supports this. Pupils said that, if any bullying does occur, teachers deal with it swiftly and effectively. Leaders work with a range of agencies to help to keep pupils safe and ensure that pupils and their families receive any support they need.

The main strength in safeguarding comes from all staff knowing the pupils at this school. Staff know the needs of pupils and their families well; staff are vigilant. Effective pastoral transition with primary schools means that staff get to know pupils quickly. They use this knowledge to provide an environment where pupils feel nurtured, valued and safe.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we considered several key lines of enquiry. The first of these looked at how effectively leaders are improving the progress of pupils, particularly in English and the humanities. Historical outcomes in these subject areas show that progress in these subjects is a priority for improvement. Leaders have implemented a range of strategies to ensure that the progress of current learners has improved. Leaders have undertaken reviews of subjects and put in extra support and classes where it is needed.
- As a result, the progress of current pupils across year groups is good. The quality of teaching over time seen during inspection in pupils' books supports the information provided by the school. This information shows that pupils now make more secure progress in these subject areas. Teachers have high expectations of pupils; pupils rise to this challenge. They use vocabulary increasingly well. This is seen in the high-quality pieces of extended writing that they produce in English and other subjects across the curriculum. Work seen in humanities books shows that pupils now make good progress over time, particularly in history.
- The progress of most groups of pupils is good across year groups and subjects. However, the progress of some most-able pupils is more variable. Some learning does not consistently stretch, challenge and engage pupils, particularly the most able.
- The second line of enquiry considered whether the curriculum adequately meets the needs of pupils in the school. Leaders ensure that pupils experience a curriculum that is broad and develops their knowledge and skills in a wide range of subjects at key stages 3 and 4. In 2018, the English Baccalaureate (Ebacc) entry rate was considerably lower than the national average. The Ebacc average point score was also lower than the national average. Leaders have secure plans in place to increase the proportion of pupils following Ebacc courses in line with government ambitions. There is an increase in the time allocated for pupils to study humanities and languages during key stage 3. Alongside good teaching and learning in these subjects, leaders have planned to ensure that, over time, greater numbers of pupils will be studying this suite of academic subjects.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have a timetabled opportunity every fortnight during key stage 4 to experience a range of enrichment activities. Pupils speak extremely positively about the range of opportunities available to them, from Thai boxing to photography. Pupils appreciate the opportunities for them to develop new skills and try new experiences. Pupils also welcome the positive impact that the enrichment programme has on their mental well-being and personal development.

- The third line of enquiry looked at how well pupils behave around the school and in lessons. Pupils, staff and parents say that behaviour in the school is good and that teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils. There are infrequent occasions when pupils do not behave in line with expectations. These incidents are dealt with in a timely and effective manner, so that learning is not interrupted. Incidences of fixed-term exclusions have reduced significantly and the environment around the school and in lessons is calm and orderly. Pupils are well mannered, compliant and show respect to one another and to staff.
- Pupils' attendance was another focus of the inspection. Leaders and staff work hard to improve the attendance of pupils, particularly that of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result of wide-ranging strategies and strong relationships with home, attendance for all pupils and all groups of pupils is improving towards the national average. Leaders monitor attendance closely. Where issues are identified, pupils are supported quickly and effectively. In addition, leaders work closely with external agencies so that appropriate action can be taken with pupils and their families.
- The proportion of pupils who regularly miss school is decreasing. This is in part due to leaders' work on the analysis of trends and their close relationships with families. Leaders and governors work hard with parents, so that they realise the importance of their children not missing valuable learning time. Pupils enjoy being in the school and most do their best not to have time off. They speak highly of the attendance rewards they receive. More pupils are now attending regularly. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is still too low.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they develop a whole-school strategy which challenges pupils, including the most able, to excel across a range of subjects and ignites pupils' thirst for learning
- they continue to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, so that they attend school more regularly and fewer are persistently absent from school.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen O'Neill
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we met with you and other senior leaders, a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, and representatives of the local authority. The lead inspector also spoke to a governor by telephone. We met formally with groups of pupils from across the school and talked informally with others around the school and in lessons.

You and senior leaders accompanied inspectors on visits to classes, where we observed teaching and learning, spoke with pupils and looked at the work in some pupils' books. We examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, leadership and management, and the school's assessment information related to pupils' progress and attainment. We also considered the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation report.

As part of the inspection, inspectors considered the views expressed by parents in the 40 responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View. Inspectors also took into account the 49 responses to a questionnaire for staff and 90 responses from pupils to Ofsted's online survey.