

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



29 March 2017

Mr Jonathan Mellor
Headteacher
Limehurst Academy
Bridge Street
Loughborough
Leicestershire
LE11 1NH

Dear Mr Mellor

Short inspection of Limehurst Academy

Following my visit to the school on 21 March 2017 with Ofsted Inspector Sally Wicken, 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. You, supported by a highly effective and ambitious senior team, have managed the challenge of extending the age range and the transition to an 11–16 school in 2013. You have done this with enthusiasm and determination that the growth of the school would only be of benefit for your pupils. This, coupled with an accurate, honest and reflective view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, has led to improvements in the outcomes for pupils at key stage 4 in 2016. Overall, pupils now make the progress that is expected of them and many far exceed it. You are driven by a moral purpose to ensure that your pupils succeed, and you make it your business to understand the barriers to learning that pupils face and help them overcome these. Parents are very positive about the school.

The school is a cohesive and inclusive community that is characterised by pupils who are respectful of each other. They are polite, courteous and, on many occasions, pupils held doors open for inspectors and each other as they moved about the school. Pupils appreciate the caring, positive relationships that exist between staff and pupils and, as a result, a harmonious environment exists. One pupil told inspectors, 'you feel safe to be who you want to be'. Your staff are also positive about the school and enjoy working there because they are well supported, challenged and feel valued. They said it was a school to be proud of. Your actions as leaders reflect the school's motto of 'achievement in a caring environment'.

At the previous inspection, leaders were tasked with improving some aspects of

teaching, reducing long-term absences and developing governance. Also, during a more recent monitoring visit from an inspector, you were asked to prioritise improving attendance further, ensure that staff have consistent expectations of behaviour and make sure that a monitoring system is implemented to ensure that leaders can quickly improve pupils' behaviour. You have tackled these areas swiftly and effectively. You have introduced a new monitoring and tracking system for both attendance and behaviour. Leaders rigorously and quickly act on this information and there are clear rewards and consequences for any behaviour that either meets or does not meet your high standards.

The improved monitoring systems and forensic analysis of your assessment information are now used by your senior and middle leaders to quickly identify any underachievement of individual pupils or groups of pupils. This allows your teachers to quickly intervene and provide extra support for those who need it. Leaders have identified best practice among your teachers and provide opportunities to share strategies to address any underperformance of pupil groups. However, you agree there is still more to do to tackle the slower progress of pupils who speak English as their first language, particularly white boys, and to ensure that there is greater challenge for your most able pupils.

The governing board has recently undergone many changes, including a new chair of the board. From a governor skills audit, they have identified gaps and have successfully recruited members from local businesses and industry to strengthen the governing board. They have received appropriate training, from the school improvement partner, to help them understand and fulfil their roles more effectively. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and what is going well. They know this due to their regular visits to the school and interaction with school life. They work closely with leaders in order to identify the next steps for the school's development. Consequently, the governing body are more robust in the way they challenge and hold leaders to account for the extra funding they receive, as well as the impact this funding has on pupils' achievement.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that keeping pupils safe takes a high priority at your school and you 'live and breathe it daily'. Leaders who have responsibility for safeguarding work well as a team to provide effective and robust support for pupils about whom they have welfare concerns.

These leaders work well with parents and local agencies, such as the police and social services, to ensure that pupils receive the support they need. They are sensitive to the issues in the local area that may affect pupils' welfare. Leaders ensure that staff receive appropriate information to enable them to support pupils where such issues affect them. Consequently, parents and pupils are positive about the care and support that they receive, especially those who need additional help.

Pupils have a range of opportunities to learn about keeping safe, through assemblies and citizenship lessons. An example of this is 'Kayleigh's love story',

which has been used to teach pupils how to stay safe online. As a result of this, pupils say that they feel very safe in school, and this is overwhelmingly supported by the views of parents. They are aware of how to stay safe when using the internet and social media. Instances of bullying are rare. When they do arise, pupils are very confident that staff will deal with them swiftly.

Inspection findings

- Pupils enjoy coming to Limehurst Academy. This is indicated by how regularly they attend. In 2016, the overall attendance rate was well above the national average. The school has worked well with parents to ensure that they do not take their children out of school during term time and, as a result, the number of pupils who miss long periods of time has significantly reduced. The school's own information shows this continues to be the case and no group of pupils attends less than their peers. Support provided by staff also means that those pupils who need to be absent for medical reasons still make good progress.
- Punctuality to school in the morning and between lessons is very good. The rigorous approaches you have introduced have resulted in the number of times pupils are late for school being halved in the last year. Pupils have responded well and only a few pupils are repeatedly late. Pupils wear their uniform with pride.
- Staff have high expectations of behaviour and no low-level disruption of learning was seen during the inspection. Due to the strong collaboration of the pastoral team with subject and senior leaders, there is now a rapid response to any behavioural issues and these are dealt with effectively. The school has not permanently excluded any pupils and the number of fixed-term exclusions has rapidly decreased since 2015. The reduction continues this year and there have been no repeat exclusions to date.
- Following leaders' review and evaluation of the curriculum, you have amended and broadened the subjects you offer to pupils for their GCSEs. The curriculum is now well designed and gives pupils a broad range of experiences and a good balance of academic and creative subjects. Pupils start their GCSE courses in Year 9 and follow different 'pathways' depending on their interests and abilities. This gives pupils the time to build up their knowledge and apply their understanding. It now ensures that pupils study courses that are tailored to their needs.
- In 2016, pupils who speak English as an additional language made very good progress and achieved well across the curriculum. You recognise this was not the case for pupils who have English as their first language and, in particular, boys. In response, you have put in place a range of plans to improve their learning and have appointed a home-liaison officer who is supporting parents to engage more with school life. Your own information indicates that although their achievement is improving, it remains a key focus for the school.
- You are making the most of the links you have with neighbouring schools as part of the North Charnwood Learning Partnership. This is providing you with very valuable opportunities to moderate and improve the accuracy of your assessment

information and to share effective practice beyond Limehurst Academy.

- You have created a culture of collaboration and middle leaders are working closely together to share their expertise and ways to address any underperformance. They have made links with local businesses and have students visiting from the local universities to help inspire pupils. The special educational needs coordinator closely monitors academic progress and regularly discusses with your subject leaders ways to support pupils who struggle with their learning. This joint approach means that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same progress as their peers with the same starting points, and in many cases, they progress quicker.
- In 2016, the progress of your most able pupils was similar to that of other pupils nationally. Due to the high ambitions you have for all pupils, you have already identified that this is an area where achievement needs to improve further. During the inspection, pupils, in particular the most able, were seen waiting for more work as they had finished before others and learning time was lost.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress of pupils who speak English as their first language, specifically white boys, continues to improve rapidly
- teachers continue to develop strategies to increase the challenge of the most able pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Vasey
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, your senior leadership team and other members of staff with leadership responsibilities. Along with a senior leader, we visited nine classes during the day. We met with pupils and talked to them about their experiences of school and observed their behaviour at break and lunchtime. We met with a large representation of the governing board, including the chair of governors, and had a phone conversation with the school improvement partner. We scrutinised documents, including the school's self-evaluation and action plan, safeguarding and child protection files, and data about the attendance, behaviour and progress of current pupils. We also considered 119 responses to Parent View, and 27 responses from pupils and 73 responses from members of staff to the online questionnaires.