

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



21 November 2018

Mr Will Carr  
Headteacher  
Ralph Thoresby School  
Holtdale Approach  
Leeds  
West Yorkshire  
LS16 7RX

Dear Mr Carr

### **Short inspection of Ralph Thoresby School**

Following my visit to the school on 16 October 2018 with Patricia Head, 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 March 2015.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

This is a school where staff and pupils celebrate diversity and promote values of tolerance, mutual respect and care for others. All faiths, backgrounds and religions are celebrated and pride in diversity is part of school life. One pupil commented, 'We all have something in common.' Recently, pupils enjoyed cooking meals for one another that represented different countries. Proceeds from sales were given to charity. You have built strong links with the local community by inviting local faith leaders into school to work with your pupils.

The school is a caring environment where pupils are polite and respectful. Inspectors saw high standards of behaviour in lessons and around the school. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Consequently, the working atmosphere in classrooms is positive.

At the last inspection, you were asked to improve the quality of teaching, particularly in science, to raise pupils' achievement. New science leadership has helped to raise teacher expectations and the quality of teaching, leading to stronger pupils' progress. You were also asked to set consistently high expectations for the presentation of pupils' work. Inspection evidence demonstrates that pupils take pride in their learning. Written work is neat. Pupils follow the school's guidelines for setting out their work and take care when making corrections.

At the last inspection, you were also asked to make sure that the gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils were closed. You have made some progress in addressing this. New leaders have put in place a range of additional strategies to support disadvantaged pupils more effectively. The progress of current disadvantaged pupils is improving. Even so, this still lags behind that of other pupils. You acknowledge that further improving the progress, and attendance, of disadvantaged pupils remains a priority.

The quality of provision for post-16 students remains good. Students make consistently good progress over time. Year 12 and 13 students say that teachers are supportive. Many students progress to their first-choice university, further education, training or employment.

Governors are clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They support and challenge leaders in equal measure. They are passionate about the school's caring ethos and support your decisions to adapt the curriculum to meet pupils' needs.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders, including governors, ensure that a culture of safeguarding is prominent in the school. Thorough systems and procedures are in place to check the safe recruitment of staff. All staff, including governors, receive appropriate safeguarding training. As a result, staff understand how to spot signs of neglect and what they must do if they have a concern. Regular safeguarding bulletins are sent to staff to ensure that they are kept up to date with safeguarding developments. Leaders' links with external partners are strong. This ensures that leaders can follow up concerns with relevant professionals to keep pupils safe. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils in alternative education is strong. Leaders' strategies to record and monitor attendance are robust.

Pupils feel safe in school. They know who to go to if they have a concern. Pupils say that bullying is rare. When bullying does occur, pupils say that staff deal with it swiftly and that issues between pupils are usually resolved. Anti-bullying ambassadors promote the values of tolerance and respect. Furthermore, pupils say they can speak with their peers if they are concerned about an issue. Pupils are taught about the dangers of risk-taking behaviours through the curriculum and understand the dangers of the internet. Pupils know how to stay safe online.

### **Inspection findings**

- Provisional outcomes in Year 11 in 2018 are not as strong as in 2017. In some subjects, pupils did not make consistently good progress from their starting points or attain the standards of which they were capable. School leaders acknowledge this and are taking swift and effective action to reverse the dip. In mathematics, for example, the entry policy for GCSE has been revised and is now more appropriate for pupils.

- You have also strengthened arrangements to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Middle leaders are clearer in their responsibilities in checking the quality of teaching through observations, work scrutiny and analysis of pupils' progress. These actions are supporting improvements in teaching and, as a result, pupils' progress is also improving. Even so, inconsistencies remain as teachers' questioning does not consistently prompt deeper understanding and the most able pupils are not regularly challenged.
- In recent years, the progress of disadvantaged pupils has lagged behind that of other pupils and has not improved quickly enough. To address this, you have appointed a new senior leader to bring focus to improvement strategies. Staff have received training to identify barriers to learning and provide better support. Additional funding is being used to support activities, such as a breakfast club, and to run support programmes in English and mathematics. Teachers are also supporting pupils' social and emotional development at key stage 3. Despite this, the progress of disadvantaged pupils remains weaker and leaders have not evaluated the impact of improvement strategies sharply enough.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders make curriculum decisions based on pupils' needs. Pupils are able to study courses that they are interested in at key stages 4 and 5. This ensures that pupils develop subject-specific knowledge, skills and understanding that help them step up to their next stage in learning.
- Teachers provide post-16 students with careers advice and guidance that are effectively tailored to meet their varying needs. Students particularly appreciate the individual guidance they receive and value the varied work experience programme. As a result, they are confident in making decisions and choices about their futures.
- Enrichment activities are varied and plentiful. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the after-school clubs on offer. One pupil spoke positively about a 'healthy minds club', acknowledging that it supports pupils because it 'breaks down the stigma of mental health'. A pupil parliament is also established; pupils enjoy their voices being heard by school leaders to make changes in school.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are a strength of the school. Staff and pupils have excellent relationships. Pupils understand the consequences of their actions. They say that teachers use and apply the agreed behaviour policy consistently and fairly. Training for staff in management of pupil behaviour contributes to pupils' positive attitudes.
- In the past, attendance has been lower than average, especially for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have revised systems and procedures to manage attendance more effectively. The new attendance team provides support for pupils and families and ensures that pupil absence is investigated thoroughly. Home visits are strengthening communication with parents and carers so that they understand the importance of attending school regularly. Senior leaders meet to identify pupils who need further support. The attendance officer works closely with heads of year to ensure that pupils' social and emotional needs are addressed. While attendance continues to improve, you know that further improvement is still needed, especially to improve the attendance of

disadvantaged pupils.

- Leaders reflect on their own work. They seek additional support from the Red Kite Trust and local authority to complement their work. For example, they link with other schools to check the standards of pupils' work and share good practice in teaching, learning and assessment.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the consistency and quality of teaching, learning and assessment improve, so that pupils make consistently good progress in all subjects and attain the standards of which they are capable
- additional funding is used effectively and reviewed regularly to support disadvantaged pupils to make better progress
- attendance, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, continues to improve.

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

Yours sincerely

Angela White  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors met with you, your senior and middle leaders and a group of staff. We also met with your governors and spoke with representatives from the local authority on the telephone. The inspection team observed learning with you and members of your senior team. We also looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils informally in lessons about what they were learning and the progress they were making. We also met with pupils formally to take into account their views, including students in the sixth form.

We scrutinised and evaluated a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation information, the school improvement plan, minutes from governors' meetings, safeguarding records, attendance and behaviour information and pupil progress information. We also conducted a work scrutiny. Inspectors considered the views of 76 parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 54 responses to staff questionnaires.