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Mr Mark Guest
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Dear Mr Guest

Short inspection of Sir William Robertson Academy, Welbourn

Following my visit to the school on 19 March 2019 with Jackie Thornalley, 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.

You and your leaders share a determination to improve the quality of education at Sir William Robertson Academy and have a committed staff team. A good sign that your leadership has had an impact is the increased popularity of the school. The school attracts pupils from a wide geographical area.

You know your school well, including its strengths and weaknesses. Your self-evaluation is detailed, honest and accurate. Your plans to address the areas that need to improve are clear and appropriate. You recognised that since your last inspection, progress was not good enough in some areas and you have worked hard to make improvements. As a result, there are now clear signs that pupils and students are reaching higher standards. Most staff, pupils and parents have a positive view and support the work of the school.

Trustees and members of the local governing body are supporting leaders to improve the school well. They offer a diverse range of skills and bring a range of expertise to the school. You and your leaders ensure that they are provided with the information they need to have an accurate view and understand which aspects of the school still need to improve. They have a very clear understanding of what needs to be done to bring about improvement. Consequently, trustees and governors are well placed to provide appropriate challenge and support to you and

your leaders.

During the inspection, it was evident that pupils behave respectfully and conduct themselves well. Pupils spoken to said this was typical. Pupils were polite and well mannered. Teachers and pupils have positive relationships. As a result, pupils behave well and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning in lessons. Pupils readily follow instructions and lessons flow without disruption. Instances of serious poor behaviour are rare and, consequently, exclusions are low.

The school's actions to improve teaching and learning have had some success and are helping pupils to make better progress. Teachers generally plan lessons well, ensuring that work is set at the right level and that pupils are appropriately challenged. Time is usually used well in lessons and questioning is used effectively to probe pupils' knowledge and understanding. Most pupils take a pride in their work and appreciate the feedback they get from teachers to help them improve it. Consequently, most pupils make progress in most subjects. However, leaders recognise there is further work to do to ensure consistency and further improvement in some subject areas, particularly English.

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed the key lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. These included establishing the effectiveness of leaders' actions to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. We looked at the effectiveness of leaders' actions to raise the achievement of pupils in the key subject of English and of students in the sixth form. We also looked at the progress you have made in addressing the areas for improvement identified in the school's last inspection. Lastly, we checked whether safeguarding is effective. These lines of enquiry are considered below.

You have responded very well to the areas for improvement from the last inspection. At the time of the last inspection, inspectors asked the school to increase the challenge in lessons for pupils and ensure better use of questioning by teachers in the classroom. These areas have been, and remain, key priorities in the school's improvement plans. Teachers have received considerable additional training to help improve their skills in these areas. While not fully addressed, school monitoring and inspection evidence indicates that good progress has been made in ensuring that pupils are challenged, and that questioning is used more effectively. The previous inspection report also called for improvements in the range of courses available in the sixth form. The courses on offer in the sixth form are now reviewed annually and there is now a much wider range of courses that are better suited to the needs of the students.

Safeguarding is effective.

A strong culture of safeguarding exists in the school and you have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Record-keeping is detailed and records are of good quality. The school works effectively with a range of outside agencies to support pupils and make sure they are kept safe. There are suitable systems in place to check on the recruitment of staff. Staff and governors receive

regular safeguarding training to ensure their knowledge is kept up to date. Staff know how to raise and report any concerns they might have.

Pupils are safe and cared for well. Pupils and parents agree that the school is a safe place. Pupils also say that are well informed about what they can do to keep themselves safe. Pupils know who to turn to within the school if they have concerns. They told inspectors that your staff deal promptly and appropriately with the rare occurrences of bullying.

Inspection findings

- Overall, pupils' progress over time in their GCSE subjects has been broadly in line with the national average. Data provided by the school on current pupils and the work seen in their books indicate that current pupils are on track to achieve ambitious targets and make even better progress. However, inconsistencies remain between subjects in the amount of progress being made. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is a strength and these pupils make good progress. Several parents who completed the online survey commented on how pleased they were with the provision for their child and the progress they were making at the school.
- The progress of pupils at the end of key stage 4 in English has not been as high as in other key subjects in the school. Action taken by leaders has had some success in bringing improvement to this subject. Staffing is now more stable in the English department and, consequently, teaching is now more consistent in quality. Data provided by the school indicates that pupils are on track to make much improved progress in their GCSE courses this year. However, the progress of some pupils, particularly those who enter the school with high prior attainment, is not yet good enough. Leaders need to continue to take the required action to resolve this.
- In the past, disadvantaged pupils have not achieved as well as other pupils nationally in their GCSE examinations. Leaders are now much better at evaluating the strategies they are using to improve the progress of these pupils. One strategy that has been particularly successful has been the one-to-one tuition in English and mathematics. Every disadvantaged pupil receives an additional six hours English and eight hours mathematics tuition each year. Tests taken by pupils before and after this intervention show that the tuition has a significant impact on their learning. In addition, teachers are much better equipped to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils in the classroom. Consequently, the progress of disadvantaged pupils has been improving. However, the school recognises that there is still more work to be done to ensure their progress moves even closer to the national average for non-disadvantaged pupils.
- In the sixth form, students in Year 13 made below-average progress in 2018 in their A-level courses. Progress on vocational courses has been much stronger. The new head of sixth form carries out a termly review of the sixth form and has a clear understanding of where the areas requiring improvement are. She has taken effective action to reverse this dip in progress, including ensuring that teachers are better trained to teach key stage 5 students. The tracking of student

progress has been enhanced to enable the school to intervene more effectively with underachieving students. Data provided by the school on current students indicates that A-level progress is on track to improve and be back in line with the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- work continues to eliminate the relative underperformance in English, particularly for pupils who enter the school with high prior attainment, so that progress is similar to that in the best performing subjects
- they continue to take action to use the pupil premium funding effectively to further improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Nigel Boyd
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, other senior leaders and governors. Inspectors visited a number of subject areas with your senior leaders to observe teaching and look at pupils' work. They met with groups of pupils. Inspectors scrutinised the school's safeguarding arrangements and records, including the school's record of recruitment checks on staff. They examined a range of other documentary evidence, including that relating to your ongoing self-evaluation and data on pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspectors considered the views of 179 parents through their responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and Ofsted's free-text service. They considered the 76 responses to Ofsted's survey for staff and the 172 responses to Ofsted's survey for pupils.