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Dear Mrs Patrick

Short inspection of Castle Rock High School

Following my visit to the school on 3 October 2017 with Ofsted Inspector Dick Vasey, 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 November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You continue to lead the school with a high level of commitment and enthusiasm. You are ambitious for pupils who attend Castle Rock and you have a great desire to improve the school further. Pupils continue to make good progress.

Leaders and governors share a clear vision for the school. You have communicated to the staff the aspects of the school that still need improvement. Staff are supportive of leaders' work. They are positive about the impact you and senior leaders have at the school. Pupils and parents are also appreciative of the school's work. There is a sense of community throughout the school.

Senior leaders have continued to improve the school since the last inspection. Leaders and governors know the school well. You and the senior leaders have accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses of the school's effectiveness through your thorough self-evaluation. This provides a secure foundation for further improvement. You are focusing your attention on accelerating pupils' progress where it is less rapid.

There are strong relationships with leaders and staff from the Ashby and Coalville Education Partnership (ACE) and the Forest Way Teaching School Alliance. You use these links well to create a common approach to school improvement and to increase staff development opportunities.

Leaders place a strong emphasis on the well-being of pupils. Pupils' behaviour within the classroom and around the school is good. They listen respectfully to staff and work well, both independently and together. Pupils who spoke with inspectors were articulate, confident and polite. They are smartly dressed and wear their uniform with pride. The school building provides a purposeful learning environment. The grounds are pleasant, tidy and well respected by all who use them.

You check and record pupils' progress meticulously. Senior leaders have worked hard to develop an effective assessment system. They have liaised with other schools to ensure that the accuracy of pupils' assessment is consistent across the schools involved. Leaders have also made sure that the school's assessment system provides a clear progression path from primary school through to upper school. Leaders, at all levels, have a clear understanding of how well individual pupils are learning over time. This enables you to provide pupils with any extra support they may need to make good progress.

You have taken action to address the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection. For example, you have discussed and refined the school's marking and feedback policy. Staff now apply the policy with a more consistent approach.

You have also improved the effectiveness of middle leaders. You check the work of middle leaders and other staff through systematic procedures and frequent, robust discussions. Leaders, at all levels, regularly report to the governing body about pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. Governors also make regular visits to the school. They use the information they gather to hold you and other senior leaders to account. At times, however, this information does not provide enough detail for governors to know which actions are making the most difference to improving the school's effectiveness.

You have a well-formed view of where variations remain in rates of progress for different groups of pupils. You recognise that most-able pupils do not make the same rapid progress as other ability groups in the school. Likewise, boys do not make the accelerated progress that girls make. You acknowledge that the number of incidents of poor behaviour is higher for boys than it is for girls. It is also higher for disadvantaged pupils. You also understand that some disadvantaged pupils do not attend as often as they should. You are taking action to address these issues but have not yet brought about the improvement needed. You acknowledge that leaders and governors do not yet check the effectiveness of some of their work systematically enough. Improvements, therefore, are not as rapid as they could be.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders give safeguarding a high priority and it continues to be effective. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of a high quality. Leaders keep staff up to date about safeguarding matters through a regular programme of training. Staff understand the school's safeguarding policies. They know what to do if they have any concerns. The school has effective referral

procedures, and communication with external agencies is strong.

Pupils say they feel safe in the school and they know that they can talk to an adult about any concerns they may have. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. This includes when working online. Parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, said that their children felt safe and were happy at school.

Inspection findings

- Senior leaders have continued to improve the quality of teaching since the last inspection. They make effective use of a thorough process for checking on the quality of teaching. Staff professional development opportunities are numerous and varied. All staff have personalised programmes to support the areas they need to improve.
- Middle leaders are confident and effective in the roles they play. They receive valuable support from senior leaders and from colleagues in partner schools. Middle leaders carry out regular and high-quality checks on their team members. They use a range of evidence to determine the quality of teaching in their subject areas. This includes looking at the work in pupils' books and talking to pupils about their learning. Middle leaders use these checks to identify and address areas for improvement. This ensures that pupils continue to make good progress.
- Senior leaders have changed the school's curriculum since the last inspection. This has increased expectations of what pupils can achieve. Training has provided teachers with effective teaching approaches. Most teachers now match the work they set for pupils more closely to their needs. Teachers use questioning well to check on pupils' understanding and to make them think more deeply. The most able pupils, however, do not yet make the same rapid progress as other pupils in the school.
- All staff are aware of the pupils who receive pupil premium funding. Leaders carefully record the progress of these pupils and quickly identify any pupil who falls behind. Class teachers provide the first layer of extra support these pupils may need. Leaders also provide further support when needed. This ensures that most of the disadvantaged pupils make at least good progress. Leaders and governors place a strong emphasis on the well-being of disadvantaged pupils.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved over the last few years. Some disadvantaged pupils, however, still do not attend school as often as they should. Incidents of poor behaviour are also more frequent for disadvantaged pupils than for others. They are placed in isolation or given a fixed-term exclusion more than other pupils in the school. Leaders' actions to improve these areas are not effective enough. Leaders and governors do not have an accurate view of which actions are improving pupils' attendance or behaviour.
- Leaders and governors make use of the extra funding for pupils who need extra literacy and numeracy support. About half of these pupils catch up with others nationally in reading and mathematics. However, leaders and governors are not clear about why their actions are not providing more pupils with opportunities to

make faster progress.

- Leaders have identified that boys do not make the same rapid progress as girls. They are taking action to address this. Leaders have reviewed the actions they take to motivate boys in their learning. Their approaches better reflect those that are more successful in accelerating boys' progress. Gender gaps, however, have not yet closed.
- Boys are keen to come to school and their attendance is good. The school's behaviour records, however, show that boys spend more time in the school's isolation room than girls. The number of fixed-term exclusions that boys receive is also higher than for girls. Leaders' actions to reduce the number of incidents of poor behaviour by boys are not yet effective enough.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils make the same rapid progress as other groups of pupils in the school
- they improve the attendance of persistently absent disadvantaged pupils
- they reduce the number of isolations and fixed-term exclusions of disadvantaged pupils and boys
- they use the additional funding for pupils who need extra literacy or numeracy support to increase the number of pupils who catch up.

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

Vondra Mays
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspectors held meetings with you, senior leaders, subject leaders and members of the governing body. The inspection team observed pupils' learning in several lessons. Most of this learning was observed jointly with you or other senior leaders. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around the school. They spoke with pupils informally and met with a group of pupils. An inspector listened to pupils in Year 7 reading. In addition, inspectors considered a range of documents. Safeguarding practices were also scrutinised. Inspectors reviewed the school's website to confirm whether it met the requirements on the publication of required information. Inspectors considered the views of 32 parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. This included 18 free-text responses.