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Ms Mary Copeland
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Copeland

Short inspection of Belle Vue Girls' School

Following my visit to the school on 10 November 2016 with Lynne Selkirk, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in July 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your school has not stood still. Just after the last inspection, the governors implemented their decision for the school to become a standalone converter academy. Over the school year 2015/16, you worked closely with the Bradford Diocese Academies Trust (BDAT). As the benefits of working with, and for, a wider group of schools became apparent, governors formalised this partnership. Consequently, from August 2016 Belle Vue Girls' School has been a partner school within BDAT.

Other changes since the previous inspection include the appointment of a new deputy headteacher in September 2016 and a new chair of the governing body in 2013.

Since the previous inspection, you and your team's work to develop the effectiveness of teaching has led to an overall improvement in the progress that pupils make across a range of subjects. The provisional progress information for the 2016 Year 11 pupils places the school in the top 30% of schools in the country. The journey has not been smooth as over time there have been dips in the outcomes for different subjects and for different groups of pupils. However, you have ensured that your team understands why these dips have occurred. As a result, they have taken prompt and effective action to secure better results across

all subjects and for different groups of pupils. Importantly, the difference between the progress that disadvantaged and other pupils make is reducing and pupils who arrive with low levels of attainment now make the most rapid progress.

You and your team are not complacent. The new deputy headteacher is introducing further refinements to the way teachers are supported. She is working closely alongside the other deputy, who is refining the way that information about the progress pupils make, in each year group, across each subject, is used to support the development of even more effective teaching.

Middle leaders talk confidently about how their roles have developed since the last inspection and how this enables them to more effectively support teachers in the faculties they lead. They have a detailed knowledge of pupils' progress, including that of disadvantaged pupils, and how this is improving. You have developed 'differentiation and acceleration plans' for each class, which are completed after each assessment cycle. As a result, teachers clearly identify the type of support each pupil needs to make at least expected progress. Leaders routinely check that these plans are being used effectively.

In 2015, the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was not strong. Consequently, you made an interim change to the leadership for this important aspect of the school's work, but experienced difficulties in recruiting a suitable, permanent replacement. This led to your decision to provide further training for a teacher skilled in this area. Outcomes for pupils who have different special educational needs are improving. You are increasing the range of qualification routes for this group of pupils so that their attainment is recognised. However, assessment information is not analysed well enough as it does not compare progress with other pupils with the same starting points. You recognise that the developments in tracking all pupils' progress must include sharper focus on this group. The required published information about provision for this group of pupils has not been kept up to date. The updated special educational needs information report will be finalised before the next meeting of the governing body.

At the time of the last inspection, teaching and achievement in the sixth form were not as strong as in other areas. Since then, you have increased the leadership capacity for the sixth form with the additional appointment of a leader for learning and progress. The summary evaluation and subsequent development planning for the sixth form are not as accurate as they are for other areas of the school's work. Nevertheless, students' progress, including that of disadvantaged students, is improving both in academic and vocational courses. You offer a wide range of enrichment activities, including those focused on developing students' confidence in public speaking. A recent example of this is their participation in the Women of the World (WOW) festival. Work experience is offered to all students, but fewer A-level students take up the offer. Students are well advised and guided in their choices of course. As a result, the vast majority stay on to complete their course and move on to higher education or further training and employment. The sixth form makes effective provision for students who have a range of special educational needs

and/or disabilities, including those with low levels of prior attainment. Some students, when necessary, improve their GCSE grades in mathematics and English. However, leaders recognise that developing teaching that is more effective would increase the number of students gaining higher grades.

Governors continue to provide a strong strategic steer to the school. They hold you and other leaders to account with an appropriate balance of support and challenge. While governors worked through the process of joining BDAT they did not ensure that all required policies were kept up to date.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils talk about feeling safe and how well they are cared for. Staff, supported by the pastoral team, have a strong focus on pupils' emotional well-being. They have recognised that pupils face greater demands and challenges with the new GCSE arrangements, so they need to focus on building pupils' resilience and confidence. As a result, the vast majority of pupils are confident about discussing things that concern them.

Staff use their up-to-date training to identify pupils who need help and support, particularly those who need protection against radicalisation and forced marriage. Staff work effectively with other agencies to ensure that pupils are safe from these forms of abuse. Evidence shows that staff are also keen-eyed at spotting pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable to neglect. They take very practical steps to support these pupils. However, some recording of these lower-level concerns does not follow best practice.

You ensure that all required checks on the suitability of staff are undertaken prior to their appointments, including the necessary further checks on those who have lived and worked abroad. However, at the start of the inspection the records of these checks were not all in one place, as required. This issue was addressed promptly during the day. You have planned an external evaluation of this aspect of the school's work, to ensure that any areas that could be further improved are identified and developed.

The leadership team and governors have been battling to address concerns about the safety of pupils as they leave the site at the end of the school day. There is very little space for the number of parents who choose to transport their daughters and this is compounded by two other schools using the same access routes. In addition, contractors working on a school building opposite do not adhere to the agreement not to move their vehicles at key times. On the day of the inspection, my colleague saw contractors and parents ignoring the concerted efforts of school staff to manage the impact of this difficult situation. You have arranged a further meeting with the local authority to try to resolve this issue. In the meantime, the school must sustain its efforts to work with parents and others to minimise these risks to pupils.

Inspection findings

- The leadership team's evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment is accurate. Equally, teachers' assessments of pupils' progress are accurate because you ensure that these assessments are moderated by other schools within the trust. This supports teachers' growing confidence in understanding the challenges of new courses and qualifications and the higher key stage 3 expectations.
- As a result of effective teaching, including teachers' effective questioning and clear verbal and written feedback on how pupils can improve their work, pupils continue to make good progress from their generally low starting points.
- Teachers are keenly aware of providing a high level of challenge to the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, so that they reach the higher standards of which they are capable. Evidence in assessment information, confirmed by the work in pupils' books, shows that these pupils are reaching high standards. Displays of work that enhance the corridors and communal areas demonstrate the high standards achieved in art.
- A range of pupils read to inspectors during visits to lessons, including pupils with low reading skills. They were all keen and read confidently.
- Teachers understand the needs of the pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities because of the clear individual plans and information they receive about these pupils. The recently established nurture group for a group of vulnerable Year 7 pupils is helping them to settle quickly into secondary education.
- Pupils' personal development is a strength. You successfully support all aspects of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils and sixth form students develop skills and a good understanding of how to be good British citizens as well as 'women of the future'.
- You have ensured that pupils' attendance is now in line with levels of attendance in most other schools. You take a very strong line with parents who take their children out of school for holidays or extended overseas visits. There is a difference between the attendance of the pupils who are disadvantaged and other pupils. This is not reducing as much or as quickly as you would like. Similarly, the attendance of sixth form students is not as good as it could be. You have prioritised these groups for further support this year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they work closely and urgently with parents and others to minimise the risk of accidents when pupils are leaving the site at the end of the school day
- they develop a system to ensure that all required policies are kept up to date and published, and are clear when they follow BDAT- or school-specific policies
- sixth form leaders develop a sharper evaluation of what is working well and what needs further development in the sixth form, including the uptake of work experience by A-level students, attendance and the effectiveness of

teaching mathematics and English GCSE.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer of Bradford Diocese Academies Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bradford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Susan Hayter
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we discussed all aspects of the school's work, including your own evaluation of the effectiveness of the school and your plans for developing the school further. A range of documents, including the minutes of the governing body meetings, safeguarding records and records relating to your evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching, were examined. The deputy headteachers and inspectors visited a range of lessons, including in the sixth form. When in lessons, inspectors listened to pupils read and reviewed the work in their books.

Meetings were held with the assistant headteacher responsible for inclusion, to discuss safeguarding, attendance and provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities; middle leaders; leaders responsible for the sixth form; the chair of the governing body and one other governor; and the chief executive officer and director for secondary schools from BDAT.

I considered the 112 responses to the Ofsted online pupil survey and the four written responses from parents on Parent View.

In planning for the inspection, I decided to focus on the following aspects of the school's work:

- how well leaders had addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection, and in particular the effectiveness of teaching and the work of middle leaders
- the provision made for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- how well leaders have established the 16 to 19 study programmes in the sixth form and how this leads to at least good progress for the sixth form students
- how effectively governors fulfil their statutory duties and challenge leaders to ensure consistently improving outcomes for all pupils
- the effectiveness of the arrangements for safeguarding pupils.