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Mrs Michele Anderson
Headmistress
Spalding High School
Stonegate
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Lincolnshire
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Dear Mrs Anderson

No formal designation inspection of Spalding High School

Following my visit to your school with Christine Horrocks, John Edwards and Matthew Sammy, Ofsted Inspectors, on 4 and 5 February 2020, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector wished to determine if standards at the school had declined since the previous inspection in June 2009.

Evidence

Inspectors met with you, senior leaders and a range of subject leaders. Meetings were also held with the school's designated leaders for safeguarding, leader for the sixth form and the coordinator for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SENCo). The lead inspector also met with members of the governing body, including the chair. Inspectors met with several groups of pupils. They also spoke to pupils informally around the school site. Inspectors explored a range of documents including policies and arrangements for safeguarding. The 182 responses to Ofsted Parent View were also considered.

The subjects that were considered in depth as part of this inspection were English, mathematics, geography, art and music. In each subject, inspectors visited lessons, scrutinised the work in pupils' books and held discussions with subject leaders, teachers and pupils.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school continues to be outstanding.

Context

Spalding High School is an average-sized selective secondary school for girls with 980 pupils currently on roll, including 238 students in the sixth form. The sixth form admits both girls and boys. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is well below average.

Main findings

Leaders have maintained an outstanding quality of education in almost all subjects. They strive for pupils' highest success but strike the right balance between pupils' academic achievement and their non-academic and creative pursuits. Pupils and parents respect that expectations are high. The school is a welcoming and inclusive environment. Staff and pupils work together to uphold its positive ethos.

Leaders, including governors, know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They are ambitious and determined to sustain high standards. Leaders have identified priorities for further improvement. Governors hold them to account well. Staff are supportive of one another and their morale is high. They enjoy working at the school and are committed to it. Leaders are considerate of staff workload. They consult staff before making any changes.

The curriculum is well considered and ambitious. It is broad and balanced, with the flexibility to adapt to meet the needs and aspirations of pupils. Most pupils follow a curriculum designed to help them achieve GCSEs in English, mathematics, science, humanities and modern foreign languages. In almost all subjects, curriculum leaders have a strong understanding of what pupils should learn and when. In recent years pupils have underachieved in mathematics. Leaders have begun work to improve the curriculum in mathematics. The planning and implementation of the curriculum in chemistry are developing.

Leaders have put in place high-quality professional training. They have ensured that staff deliver a challenging curriculum which demands the best from pupils. Pupils feel confident in their learning and achieve well. Students in the sixth form are confident. They articulate their understanding maturely in subjects such as geography and business studies, for example.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are exceptionally positive. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They use this enthusiastically to engage and motivate pupils in their learning. Teachers use questioning effectively to deepen pupils' understanding. They prepare learning activities and resources thoughtfully. Teachers place a high importance on developing pupils' literacy. They help pupils become confident in their use of subject-specific terminology. Teachers use assessment well to check pupils' understanding and clear up any misconceptions. Pupils achieve strongly in most of their subjects. Pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as other pupils. They maintain a very high quality of work across the curriculum. Students in the sixth form achieve well. They say they feel challenged and well supported.

Teachers know their pupils very well, including those who need greater support. Pupils in the main school say they appreciate the high level of support that they receive from their teachers. Staff provide many opportunities for extended learning and homework support at lunchtime. However, some pupils feel less confident about their knowledge and understanding in mathematics and chemistry. They need more precise support. Leaders have taken steps to enhance the quality of education in these areas.

Pupils are happy and proud to attend the school. They are exceptionally supportive of one another. Their conduct reflects the ethos and values of the school: 'resilience, reciprocity, reflectiveness and resourcefulness'. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site is exemplary. They are polite, courteous and helpful. Students in the sixth form are excellent role models for younger pupils in the school. Many provide mentoring support in different subjects, for example. In lessons pupils follow instructions promptly. They show high levels of confidence during discussions and debate. Relationships between pupils and staff are positive. Pupils report that levels of bullying are very low. They are very confident that bullying is not tolerated and that any issues would be resolved swiftly.

Leaders take the personal development of pupils very seriously. A comprehensive curriculum plan covers a wide range of themes across all year groups. Topics include healthy relationships, online safety and extremism and radicalisation. Leaders pay attention to pupils' mental health and well-being. Pupils have a deep understanding of moral, social and cultural issues. They engage well in discussion and debates. They are prepared well for life in modern Britain. Pupils receive effective support for their next steps in education, employment or training.

Pupils relish the opportunities to take on leadership responsibilities. Examples include acting as anti-bullying ambassadors and organising charity events. Many pupils take part in the National Citizenship Service. Opportunities for participating in extra-curricular activities are plentiful. Pupils and parents appreciate these opportunities, such as choir, gymnastics, debating, art and drama clubs, and a robotics club. Pupils enjoy the varied school trips and visits that enrich the curriculum. Pupils in Year 7 enthused about their recent visit to London and the Tate Modern gallery, for example.

Safeguarding

The school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that the school's systems for safeguarding pupils are fit for purpose. Staff are well trained. Detailed record-keeping shows that staff follow reporting procedures well. Leaders work closely with external agencies to help keep vulnerable pupils safe, including children's services and the police. Leaders carry out the required checks to ensure that all adults working in the school are suitable to work with young people. Pupils report that they feel safe in school. They know who they can talk to if they have any worries or concerns. Parents who responded to Ofsted's survey agree. The school's curriculum for personal development ensures that pupils understand how to keep safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

- Leaders have improved curriculum plans to help pupils acquire knowledge and understanding over time. However, leaders' intent and implementation of the curriculum are not consistently effective in chemistry and mathematics. In these subjects, leaders should further develop their plans to ensure that teachers set demanding work which secures and deepens pupils' understanding. Leaders should also ensure that closer levels of support are provided for pupils when this is required.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Stevens
Her Majesty's Inspector