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Mr Hans van Mourik Broekman
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Dear Mr Broekman

Short inspection of Liverpool College

Following my visit to the school on 8 January 2019 with Elaine White, Ofsted Inspector, and Linda Griffiths, 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 May 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Your very effective leadership means that the school is in an even stronger position now than at the time of the last inspection. You are very ably assisted by an impressive team of senior leaders. Members of this team work collaboratively to realise the very clear vision for the school. The ethos of the school is embodied in its mission, 'Learning with Character'. This culture imbues all aspects of school life.

Enabling all pupils to achieve their academic and personal potential is the school's raison d'être. Particularly impressive is your commitment to providing disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils with a high-quality education. These pupils benefit enormously from the school's nurturing environment. The combination of genuine care and high expectations means that they thrive and achieve at Liverpool College.

The governing body shares the school's inclusive values. Governors work closely with you to provide the school with strong strategic leadership. Governors possess the necessary skills and expertise to be able to support and challenge senior leaders

effectively. A strong and mutually beneficial relationship exists between Liverpool College and the local authority. You work closely with a representative of the local authority as part of your ongoing improvement programme. The local authority holds in high esteem the excellent work that you do with vulnerable pupils, particularly those who are looked after.

The responses to the staff online questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive. Staff are proud to be members of the school community. They feel well supported and enjoy working at the school. These positive views are echoed by pupils. They particularly value the help and support that they receive from their teachers. As one sixth-form student stated, 'Teachers are prepared to sacrifice their own time to help us.'

Responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, indicate that parents and carers are generally very positive about the school. Many of those who responded to the free-text section of the questionnaire spoke of how pleased they are with the high-quality teaching and leadership in the school. Many parents believe that their children are flourishing at the school. This opinion is summed up in one parent's comment, 'My children are happy and thriving academically.' Parents are full of praise for the wide range of enrichment and personal-development opportunities. To call these extra-curricular activities would be a misnomer as they are very much at the heart of the school's curriculum.

You have taken decisive and effective action to address the areas for improvement that were identified at the last inspection. The quality of teaching across the school has continued to improve. Most teachers now routinely use questioning well to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. They also set work that challenges all pupils, regardless of their abilities. The quality of subject leadership throughout the school is now strong. Leaders' actions to improve the progress that pupils make in key stages 1 and 2 are paying dividends. This can be seen most significantly in mathematics. There have been improvements in pupils' progress in writing, but this remains a key focus area for further development.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Leaders are very aware of the risks that children and young people face. Staff are trained to identify and report concerns. Consequently, pupils who need early help are supported in a timely and effective way. When necessary, staff draw on appropriate external professional support to help pupils and their families.

The school provides a safe, caring and orderly environment in which pupils can learn, play and flourish. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe. They know that they can talk to staff if they are having difficulties or are worried about anything.

All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, including protocols and practices for record-keeping. Systems to ensure that only suitable people are recruited to work with pupils in the school are secure.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry for this inspection was to investigate how leaders support disadvantaged pupils in making good progress. In 2017, disadvantaged pupils made very strong progress. However, the 2018 unvalidated performance data indicates that these pupils did not make as good progress or attain as highly as others nationally. You shared with me the case studies of the pupils with low progress figures. Taking into consideration each pupil's specific circumstances, it is evident that, in terms of their development, they did make good progress during their time at the school. You supported them well, enabling them to develop personally and gain appropriate qualifications to enable them to secure college places.
- During the inspection you told me: 'The intent of this school is to be a machine for the elimination of disadvantage.' This is not just a noble aim but a vision that informs leaders' actions. The new pupil premium strategy ensures that all staff teams in school track and review the progress of all disadvantaged pupils. This is not just from an academic perspective but includes the wider personal development of pupils, for example their involvement in the choir, orchestra and sporting fixtures. In this safe and nurturing environment, where staff have high expectations of them, disadvantaged pupils overcome their barriers to learning and thrive.
- The sixth form is larger than at the time of the last inspection. I was interested to find out whether the sixth-form curriculum effectively meets the needs of its more diverse population. The curriculum has expanded in recent years. Students can now choose from a broader range of A levels. Applied courses in sports studies and computing have also recently been added. In 2017, students made strong progress and achieved well. You explained the reasons why in some subjects in 2018 progress was not as strong and how you have addressed these issues. The poor attendance of students was a significant factor in some cases. Current attendance in the sixth form is very high.
- Leaders speak of 'a massive transformation' in the sixth form since the last inspection. For example, there has been a significant expansion in the wider-activity programme. There is also a weekly lecture programme, where students develop their knowledge and understanding by listening to a range of external speakers. All students take the Extended Project Qualification and are involved in a work-experience placement. Your focus on developing the whole student in the widest sense has a positive impact on their university applications. In 2018, 94% of students took up places in higher education, with 60% of those applying securing places at Russell Group universities, including Oxford and Cambridge. Particularly impressive is the very high proportion of disadvantaged students who enter high-ranking universities. It is no surprise that students speak very positively about all aspects of sixth-form provision. They particularly value the high-quality teaching and support that they receive.

- Another key line of enquiry during the inspection related to pupils' progress in key stage 2, particularly in writing. In 2018, the progress that pupils made at the end of key stage 2 in mathematics was above average. This reflects leaders' focus on this area over recent years. Actions that leaders are taking to improve pupils' reading are also having a positive impact. You have adopted new writing strategies in the primary phase which are helping pupils to make better progress. However, there is still more to do in this area, particularly to make sure that pupils can write confidently at greater depth. Inspection evidence indicates that honing pupils' writing skills is not just an issue in the primary phase. Looking at pupils' work across the school, it is evident that some teachers do not have high enough expectations of the standard of pupils' writing. Some teachers are also willing to accept work that is poorly presented.
- My final line of enquiry related to the quality of subject leadership and its impact on the quality of teaching. The actions that you have taken mean subject leadership across the school is in a much stronger position than it was at the time of the last inspection. A combination of new personnel and high-quality training for existing staff has created an accomplished team of subject leaders. You have developed and empowered this group of leaders to take responsibility for the quality of teaching in their faculties. Subject leaders value the collaborative and reflective culture that you have created. You have equipped them with the skills and confidence to be innovative in their practice. You have trained subject leaders and teachers to be adept at using assessment information. This means that teachers can pitch work at the right level and challenge pupils appropriately.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all teachers across the school have consistently high expectations of the quality and presentation of pupils' writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Seneviratne
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you and other senior leaders. An inspector also met with a group of subject leaders. I met with four members of the governing body, including the chair. A representative of the local authority was also involved in this meeting. Inspectors met formally with four groups of pupils and talked informally with others in lessons. Accompanied by senior leaders, inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school. Together with senior leaders, they scrutinised the work of a small group of pupils. I examined your self-evaluation document and school-development plan. I also undertook a review of the school's website. As part of the inspection, I considered the 199 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including the 130 free-text comments. I also considered the 59 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff and 65 responses to the online questionnaire for pupils.