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Ms M Oakley  
Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Oakley

### **Short inspection of Horbury Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 20 January 2016 with Malcolm Kirtley, Her Majesty's 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 November 2010.

### **This school continues to be good.**

You, and your leadership team, have maintained the good quality of education since the previous inspection. The academy is well led and you are supported by a capable senior team who plan effectively for pupils' academic and personal development. Your ambition to improve outcomes for pupils and a determination to 'fly high and be the best you can' is a vision that is shared by senior leaders, staff, directors, and the vast majority of pupils. You set clear priorities and provide staff with effective professional development and challenge.

Strengths in self-evaluation and review have been maintained since the previous inspection and you, and other leaders, have an accurate view of the academy's current performance and where you need to take action. Senior leaders have high expectations of staff, keep the quality of teaching under close review, and have acted to strengthen subject leadership following the departure of a number of staff in key subjects in 2014. Discrete leadership courses and secondments to partner schools have deepened leaders' individual and collective understanding of their roles. Focused professional development and recruitment contribute effectively to secure improvements in leadership at all levels and in the quality of teaching in key subjects.

Systems to track pupils' progress are effective and assessment information is used more purposefully by teachers to inform their planning. Pupils report that the level of challenge in tasks is increasing, particularly in mathematics and science lessons. As

teaching, learning and assessment improve they are contributing to faster progress in English, mathematics and science for most pupils in all year groups. Pupils who make slow progress are identified swiftly and focused tailored support enables them to catch up quickly, especially in reading at Key Stage 3. Leaders are tackling gaps and demonstrating the impact of actions taken to improve the progress and reduce the exclusion rates of different groups of pupils, particularly those with disadvantaged backgrounds and those with special educational needs and disabilities. A more cohesive and targeted approach to reduce absence rates has also contributed to swifter progress in English and mathematics in the last 12 months.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Pupils' welfare and safety are of utmost importance. You, your senior team and academy directors afford the highest priority to keeping pupils safe. Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Vigilance is actively promoted and the watchword of 'it could happen here' is taken seriously and applied effectively in everyday working practices. Safer recruitment practices are followed diligently. All teachers and other adults receive regular training to identify when pupils may be at risk of neglect, abuse or exploitation. Staff fully understand the school's published safeguarding policies and practices, the reasons for them, and their responsibilities to report any concerns. Records are detailed and demonstrate how multi-agency work actively supports pupils who are at risk. Care and support is firmly rooted in the academy's culture and pupils report they are listened to and feel safe.

### **Inspection findings**

Analysis and use of assessment in the academy has strengthened considerably since the previous inspection. Leaders are using assessment information effectively to make decisions about the curriculum at Key Stage 4. Teachers are using regular assessments in English and mathematics, and, increasingly, end of unit tests in several subjects, to inform their plans for learning. In Key Stage 4 classes the majority of pupils are very focused and willing to learn, keeping a careful check on their grades and progress, as well as on feedback about where they need to improve.

Typically pupils are keen to learn. They adopt a business-like approach to their work and this is reflected in the consistency with which they complete homework and in their smart appearance. A new behaviour policy, introduced in September 2015, has had a significant impact in tackling low-level disruption. However, a few staff are still finding a balance in their use of sanctions and some pupils, parents and staff have identified this inconsistency as something for the school to work on.

Since the previous inspection, additional staff and resources have been used effectively to tackle the challenging behaviour of a small number of pupils and exclusion rates have fallen dramatically since September 2015.

Current performance information shows most pupils are making faster progress in English, mathematics and science across all year groups. Leaders show determination to sustain this impact and particularly for pupils who enter the school at levels typical for their age.

Directors are aware of the actions to drive improvement further. They are reflective and do not shy away from asking challenging questions. However, they do not always bring all the information together in order to gain a deeper understanding of the impact that actions have on closing the gaps for disadvantaged pupils.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- work that has improved outcomes in English and mathematics, and in attendance and behaviour, has a similar and sustained impact over time for all groups of pupils
- rewards and sanctions in the new behaviour policy are consistently implemented and pupils are left in no doubt about the clear boundaries.

Yours sincerely

Gina White

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this short, one-day inspection, my colleague and I met with you, and members of your senior leadership team, to discuss the work of the academy to improve the quality of teaching, behaviour and attendance and the impact this is having on pupils' progress. We made joint visits to lessons with you and your deputy headteacher to observe practice and talked with teachers and pupils about their work. We sampled pupils' books with the leaders of mathematics, English, science and languages and confirmed that pupils are continuing to make at least the expected rate of progress in key subject areas. In addition we also met with three governors, including the Chair of Governors, who are also known as directors of the academy. The academy's procedures for keeping pupils safe were checked and safeguarding matters were discussed with several staff and governors. A number of documents, including pupil progress information, academy action plans, self-evaluation and policies and information posted on the academy website were considered. I looked at the Ofsted online 'Parent View' questionnaire before and during the inspection. Prior to the inspection two parents had made a response. At the end of the inspection 43 had done so. I took account of these and noted the academy's own survey of parents' views. The views of 53 pupils and 90 staff who completed Ofsted's online questionnaires were also noted.