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Mr R Preston
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Preston

**Short inspection of The Misbourne School**

Following my visit to the school on 25 May 2017 with John Burridge, 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 November 2013.

**This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your principled and aspirational leadership embeds a culture of ambition which permeates the school. Misbourne is a harmonious school where everyone pulls together to do their best. All of the staff and pupils we spoke to during the inspection were overwhelmingly positive about the school and many describe it as like a 'family'. You have high expectations and believe strongly in empowering staff and pupils to do their very best. The school's motto of 'developing tomorrow's leaders today' encapsulates appropriately the day-to-day work of your school community. A particular strength of the school is the quality of careers information and guidance provided to pupils. All pupils progress to the next stage in their education, training or employment after they leave the school. You ensure that there is no complacency within the school and you recognise that there is still more to do to achieve your ambitions.

You put the needs of pupils at the heart of everything the school does. This is a very inclusive school, where each pupil's progress and personal development really matters. Pupils make good progress across the curriculum as a result of good teaching and support. They are appropriately challenged and want to do well. Pupils of all abilities participate well in focused and purposeful lessons. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and cooperate fully with their teachers and classmates. They are friendly, polite, courteous, and conduct themselves exceptionally well in lessons and around the school. Pupils particularly appreciate the clear and consistently applied systems which ensure that the environment is very calm and

orderly. Leaders monitor pupils' progress and welfare closely. Where concerns arise, pupils receive carefully targeted support to get them back on track.

You, senior leaders and governors have taken effective action to address the areas of improvement identified at the previous inspection. The leadership of teaching and learning is a considerable strength. Leaders have focused relentlessly on improving the quality of teaching, so that pupils are challenged appropriately and know how to improve their work. Staff make good use of regular opportunities to share good practice. Leaders provide effective and personalised training for staff, relevant to the stage they are at in their career. Staff feel well supported and are determined to deliver high-quality teaching for the benefit of pupils.

At the last inspection inspectors asked you to develop pupils' understanding of their targets and of how to improve their work. You have successfully achieved this. Your new approach to assessment provides teachers with a good understanding of pupils' learning needs. As a result, the feedback which teachers provide is effective in moving pupils on in their learning.

Leaders at all levels understand clearly the school's key priorities because they all contribute to plans for further improvement. You know that, while most pupils achieve well, a small group of disadvantaged pupils, many of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities, do not make as much progress as others. In many cases, their slower progress can be attributed to irregular attendance at school. You also recognise that not all pupils and their parents share your aspirations for success and so require even more support to engage with the opportunities available to them.

**Safeguarding is effective.**

A strong culture of safeguarding and pastoral care permeates the school. Pupils feel safe and strongly value the support that they receive. They know the safeguarding team very well and are aware of who to go to if they need help. A strong culture of working in partnership prevails, because staff know pupils and their families very well. Staff monitor pupils' welfare very carefully. When necessary, safeguarding referrals are made in a timely manner and actions are followed up rigorously and relentlessly. Staff receive regular safeguarding training and have a very good understanding of the risk factors to be alert to.

The curriculum prepares pupils well for managing their own safety in their current and future lives. A comprehensive and well-structured programme of activities delivered through lessons, tutor time and assemblies supports pupils' personal development and welfare. Understanding cyber bullying is a particular focus of personal development lessons and the pupils we spoke to had a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online. Crucially, leaders and governors have no sense of complacency and are committed to maintaining the strong systems and ethos which currently exist.

## Inspection findings

- During this visit, as well as evaluating safeguarding arrangements, I focused on specific aspects of the school's provision, including:
  - the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
  - the progress made by pupils studying vocational subjects in the sixth form
  - the quality of teaching and learning in science
  - the progress of disadvantaged pupils
  - the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good across the school. In lessons, teachers have high expectations, plan tasks that provide high levels of challenge and encourage pupils to participate well. Teachers use questioning increasingly effectively to challenge pupils and probe their understanding. Pupils' attitudes to learning are overwhelmingly positive. They know what to do to improve their work and are eager to do well.
- Leaders have taken swift action to address the underachievement in some vocational qualifications in the sixth form in 2016. The curriculum has been restructured, students' coursework is now checked more closely and a learning mentor supports students who need help to stay on track. As a result, outcomes for current Year 13 students have improved so that they are now in line with the national average. Students are very positive about the sixth form, but leaders recognise the need to challenge students further so that more achieve the high grades they are capable of.
- Pupils' attainment and progress in science was well below the national average in 2016, prompting leaders to instigate an external review of the subject. As a result of the substantial support put in place and the positive commitment of the team, standards have now improved. Inspectors saw consistently strong teaching in science. Pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes and secure subject knowledge. Pupils' skills in working scientifically are improving because there is now much more opportunity for things like practical work in science lessons. Consequently, current pupils' achievement is in line with that of pupils nationally.
- Disadvantaged pupils have not achieved as well as other pupils nationally in their GCSE examinations. Leaders' rigorous monitoring of pupils' work, alongside the high level of challenge and support provided by a 'pupil premium champion' is beginning to have a positive impact. The progress of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school is more rapid than the progress of the previous cohort, especially in Year 10 where disadvantaged pupils are achieving at least as well as other pupils.
- Pupils' attendance has been below the national average in recent years and declined further in 2015/16. The poor attendance of some particular groups, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, has considerably hampered their academic progress. Consequently, leaders have prioritised improving attendance through a restructuring of leadership and carefully targeted interventions. As a result, pupils' attendance has started to improve, particularly that of pupils who have

special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, disadvantaged pupils in particular still do not attend school regularly enough.

## Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the attendance of pupils improves, especially that of disadvantaged pupils
- disadvantaged pupils make progress in line with other pupils nationally
- a small minority of pupils and their parents are supported to embrace the aspirational learning culture of the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Bagust
**Ofsted Inspector**

## Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I talked to you and members of your leadership team about your evaluation of the school's effectiveness, your plans for improvement, the progress of current pupils and the leadership of teaching and learning. I reviewed safeguarding information and met with governors. The team inspector reviewed the single central record and met with the leader of the sixth form and the leaders responsible for attendance and careers information and guidance. We both spoke with a number of groups of pupils from all year groups and observed their conduct at lunchtime. The team inspector also visited the Year 8 celebration breakfast and spoke to pupils. We visited 20 lessons jointly with senior and middle leaders, visiting English, mathematics, science, history, modern foreign languages, art and business studies. We reviewed a range of monitoring and evaluation documents and information about pupils' progress. We considered 191 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, text messages, and pupil and staff questionnaires issued by the school.