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James McGeachie  
Headteacher  
The Becket School  
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Dear Mr McGeachie

### **Short inspection of The Becket School**

Following my visit to the school on 28 March 2017 with Ofsted Inspector Julie Sheppard, 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 October 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have provided strong leadership which is well respected among staff, pupils and parents. Year on year you have built on the strengths of the school and have been relentless in tackling its weaknesses. The senior leadership team mirror the school values and clearly communicate the school's vision of high aspirations for all. Middle leaders and teachers are therefore in no doubt about these high expectations across the school. Pupils are very loyal. They value the support they receive from teachers and they have a strong sense of belonging. As one parent said, 'My daughter thrives at The Becket and she is, to say the least, very proud of "her" school.'

At the previous inspection, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of subject leadership were cited as areas of weakness. You and the senior leadership team have developed a culture of continuous professional development across the school. The school invests well in the training and development of all staff. There is a range of coaching, training and 'leaders of learning' sessions, which aim to meet the needs of teachers at different stages of their development. The close monitoring of teaching, the sharp targets set by senior leaders and a coherent appraisal system have all contributed to demonstrable improvements in teaching practice. Teachers plan their lessons using information about pupils' prior attainment and additional needs. Teachers' planning focuses

sharply on the school development plan's identified priority groups, such as boys and the disadvantaged.

Subject leaders have continuously developed their leadership skills. They value the coaching and mentoring provided by the senior leaders. Many have undertaken additional leadership courses to strengthen their skills. This has led to greater consistency in teaching across the school and improving outcomes for pupils.

The school's examination results at key stage 4 and key stage 5 have consistently been above average from 2012 to 2015. The 2016 results marked a dip in pupils' performance. You have correctly identified the progress of disadvantaged pupils as a key priority for the school. Throughout the school, there is a strong moral commitment to improve the outcomes for these pupils. Governors have appointed a pupil premium champion, who has implemented a comprehensive personalised support programme for identified pupils. Reliable current assessments of pupils' progress show that the gap in attainment of disadvantaged pupils compared to others is diminishing, especially in mathematics and English. All subject areas prioritise the progress of disadvantaged pupils during monitoring activities and departmental discussions. However, evidence gathered during the inspection suggested that in some subjects, especially at key stage 3, some disadvantaged pupils' work, mostly from boys, was markedly different to other pupils. These pupils' work was sometimes characterised by gaps in work due to absences from lessons or tasks simply left unfinished. You acknowledge that unless teachers raise their expectations and consistently ensure that these pupils catch up with work missed, their progress will inevitably be slower than others.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school has developed a strong safeguarding culture in the school. Staff are aware of their responsibilities and leaders are well trained. The posters which are strategically placed around the school, including in the toilets, which point to persons or organisations that can provide support for pupils, show the school's commitment to safeguarding its pupils. Staff are confident in using the reporting systems, including those in relation to allegations against adults.

The curriculum is constantly being developed to support pupils' understanding of how to keep safe. During the 'stop the clock' sessions, where teachers provide personal, social and health education, pupils receive guidance on topics such as internet safety, including using social media, bullying and drugs misuse. Older pupils and students in the sixth form discuss topical issues from time to time, such as terrorist attacks. A recent drama production, performed after school, raised the issue of extremism in schools. The school encourages pupils to grapple with these complex issues and, in so doing, they are helping to prevent pupils being drawn towards radicalisation and extremism.

Bullying incidents are few. Pupils are confident that their concerns will be dealt with seriously. Safeguarding arrangements are monitored by governors carefully through

the pupils and ethos committee. Pupils, staff and parents agree that The Becket School is a safe place. Pupils are well cared for.

## **Inspection findings**

- You and the leadership team have a deep and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. It is clear that improvement plans are derived from a close analysis of previous performance and improvement work. You are not afraid to discontinue work that does not make a difference to pupils' progress. For example, you have reorganised teaching assistants so that they work more specifically with pupils across subjects rather than in departmental teams. The effectiveness of teaching assistants has been much improved as a result.
- The restructuring of the timetable to allow more time for English and mathematics at key stage 4 is making a difference. Leaders of learning have used the extra time effectively to reinforce concepts and skills and give pupils more examination practice. Current assessments of pupils' work show a marked improvement in pupils' knowledge and skills.
- The governors of the school are experienced and knowledgeable. The chair of the governing body has restructured committees to ensure that all aspects for the school are monitored rigorously. Governors provide good challenge to school leaders. Regular presentations given to them by subject leaders ensure that they are able to hold all leaders to account for improvements. As a result of this inspection, the information on the school's website now meets government guidelines. The chair of the governing body recognises that the oversight of this aspect of the school requires closer monitoring.
- The work to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils is wide ranging. Bespoke mentoring and academic tutoring sessions are provided for those pupils who are falling off track. Teachers are provided with personal profiles of each eligible pupil so that they can support them more effectively in class. In the sixth form, students eligible for bursaries are supported to purchase textbooks and meet any transport costs to and from school. In addition, the school invests in these pupils' wider enrichment opportunities; for example, the cost of trips and visits to theatres and museums are met by the school.
- The school is successful in supporting vulnerable pupils. The Damascus Centre is a place where pupils who are experiencing social and emotional difficulties can be supported. A team of well-trained staff counsel pupils and engage external professionals when needed. The pupils speak positively of the centre. They say that the school takes pupils' mental well-being seriously.
- Teachers' assessments of pupils' work have been rigorously moderated using a variety of methods. The school's close links with a local network of schools, and being part of a teaching school alliance, have provided opportunities for teachers' assessments to be standardised. Pupils completed a national GCSE mock examination commissioned by a leading examination board. Pupils' results

showed an above average performance in mathematics compared with other schools that had sat the same examination.

- The most able are encouraged to reach the highest grades. Teachers in all key stages regularly provide pupils with 'challenge' questions. The most able pupils who spoke with inspectors said teachers had high expectations of them. The school has a good track record of achieving above average As and A\*s at GCSE and at A level in many subjects. Where this has not been consistently the case, as in mathematics, leaders have taken swift and effective action to address this weakness. Currently, the most able in mathematics are attaining higher grades in key stage 4 than previous years.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) monitors the progress of registered pupils closely. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support pupils both in and out of class. The SENCo keeps extensive records of the support provided for each pupil and regular assessments are made. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their different starting points.
- Students in the sixth form also make good progress from their different starting points, although the results in 2016 showed a slight decline. Subjects such as English literature and computing, which had underperformed previously, are improving. Students confirm that they are supported well by teachers both emotionally and academically. Some act as mentors to younger pupils as part of their volunteer work. After the sixth form, all students go on to pursue higher education courses, vocational training or employment. A large number of pupils were accepted at Russell Group universities.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers consistently expect pupils, especially boys and the disadvantaged, to complete all work set and catch up with any missed work, in order that they make the progress they should.

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

Yours sincerely

Zarina Connolly  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors observed learning in 15 lessons, including in the sixth form. Pupils' workbooks were examined during these lessons. Observations were carried out jointly with a senior leader. Inspectors spoke with pupils in key stages 3, 4 and 5. You, the chair of governors, senior leaders, subject leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and safeguarding leaders were interviewed. I scrutinised a range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, school policies, information about pupils' attainment and progress, and safeguarding records. Inspectors took account of 124 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, 113 responses to the free-text facility, and 56 responses to a staff survey. Due to an administrative error, no pupil responded to the online survey. Inspectors considered the school's own surveys of pupils' views.