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Mr Andy Greenhough  
Headteacher  
Ralph Allen School  
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Dear Mr Greenhough

### **Short inspection of Ralph Allen School**

Following my visit to the school on 13 March 2018 with Malcolm Davison and Gillian Hickling, Ofsted Inspectors, 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 February 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You were previously the deputy headteacher of the school and took up the post of headteacher in January 2018. You have identified the changes necessary to ensure that improvements take place more rapidly. You are passionate about the school and provide strong and confident leadership, together with a clear sense of direction. You have the full support of the staff and have further developed a strong culture of ambition and aspiration among both staff and pupils. Since the last inspection, the focus on further improving the quality of teaching is also raising pupils' outcomes. Governors are well informed and provide you with a good balance of support and challenge.

The school's self-evaluation is detailed and accurate. Leaders have precisely assessed what is working well and those areas of the school that need to be strengthened. Since taking up your post you have built on these to improve things further. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the quality of care and education their children receive. Typical comments in the responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, spoke of the school as 'warm and friendly', with 'enthusiastic' teachers. Parents are confident that you, your leaders and governors

quickly tackle any concerns they may have about the quality of education and care their children receive.

School leaders have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection well. As a result, for example, the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities has improved. Further work is still required, however, to ensure that teachers consistently use the information they have about pupils' needs to plan learning.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school has a strong commitment to the safety of pupils. Governors, you and your leadership team ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are up to date, meet requirements and are fit for purpose. The school has a comprehensive safeguarding policy and all staff and governors receive high-quality training. Records are detailed and appropriately stored and shared. You work closely with a range of outside agencies to minimise risk to pupils and keep them safe.

Pupils say they feel safe and are well aware of issues such as the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. They also value the support they receive with respect to e-safety. The school has a new system for monitoring and following up attendance, which is improving. The school has high expectations of behaviour. While the exclusion rate has been relatively high in the past, you use exclusion appropriately. The exclusion rate is now falling, indicating that pupils are responding well to the school's expectations of good behaviour.

Pupils speak highly of the support they receive. Staff ensure that pupils are aware of any potential risks to their safety. Consequently, pupils know how to avoid these risks. The majority of parents are confident that the school keeps their children safe and cares for them well. Pupils enjoy coming to school and talk confidently about what to do, and who to talk to, if they have any concerns about bullying or other issues.

### **Inspection findings**

- A key line of enquiry was the level of challenge and the help that pupils receive to make good progress. This was identified as an area needing improvement in the previous inspection report. Your plans to address this are starting to have a positive impact. Pupils value highly the support they get from teachers, which helps them to improve their work. This is particularly so in English and drama, but less so in some other subject areas.
- The previous inspection report also identified a need for improvement in the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. Pupils with differing needs are now supported well as they move through their education.

- The leadership of special educational needs is strong. The new assessment of pupils' starting points when they join the school, together with the high-quality support of the teaching assistants and learning mentors, is making a significant difference to the achievement of pupils. Nonetheless, teachers' use of information about pupils' individual needs to plan learning is not consistently embedded across the school.
- Effective teaching ensures that most disadvantaged pupils are fully involved in their lessons and their progress is in line with that of other pupils. However, leaders recognise that further work is required to ensure that teaching consistently engages disadvantaged pupils in their learning across the school.
- Our final line of enquiry considered whether the school was maintaining the recent improvements in the sixth form. The sixth form is very well led and managed. High-quality leadership, effective teaching that challenges students and strong relationships enable students to make consistently good progress and become confident young adults. It is clear that the sixth form is a strength of the school and students are extremely positive about their experiences.
- Students demonstrate impressive levels of understanding in their lessons and can speak eloquently about their work. They also appreciate the additional support which they receive outside the classroom, such as that to enable them to apply for Oxford and Cambridge universities and for subjects such as medicine. Students are equally pleased with the support they receive for considering routes other than university.
- Sixth-form students feel fully involved in the life of the school and value the range of additional activities outside the curriculum. These include involvement in drama and music, being responsible for the sixth-form newspaper and involvement in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the good teaching that is in the school is shared and used to ensure consistency in the quality of teaching and learning across all subjects
- improvements in teaching and support for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities are embedded to enable them to make the best possible progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Terence Fish  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

We held meetings with you, your senior team and governors. We talked to pupils, both formally in groups and around the school. We visited lessons with you and your team to observe learning and looked at the quality of work in pupils' books. We considered documentary evidence relating to the impact of the school's work, including on safeguarding, attendance and the use of pupil premium funding. We took account of 186 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and considered the 131 written comments from parents and looked at the 102 responses to the staff questionnaire.